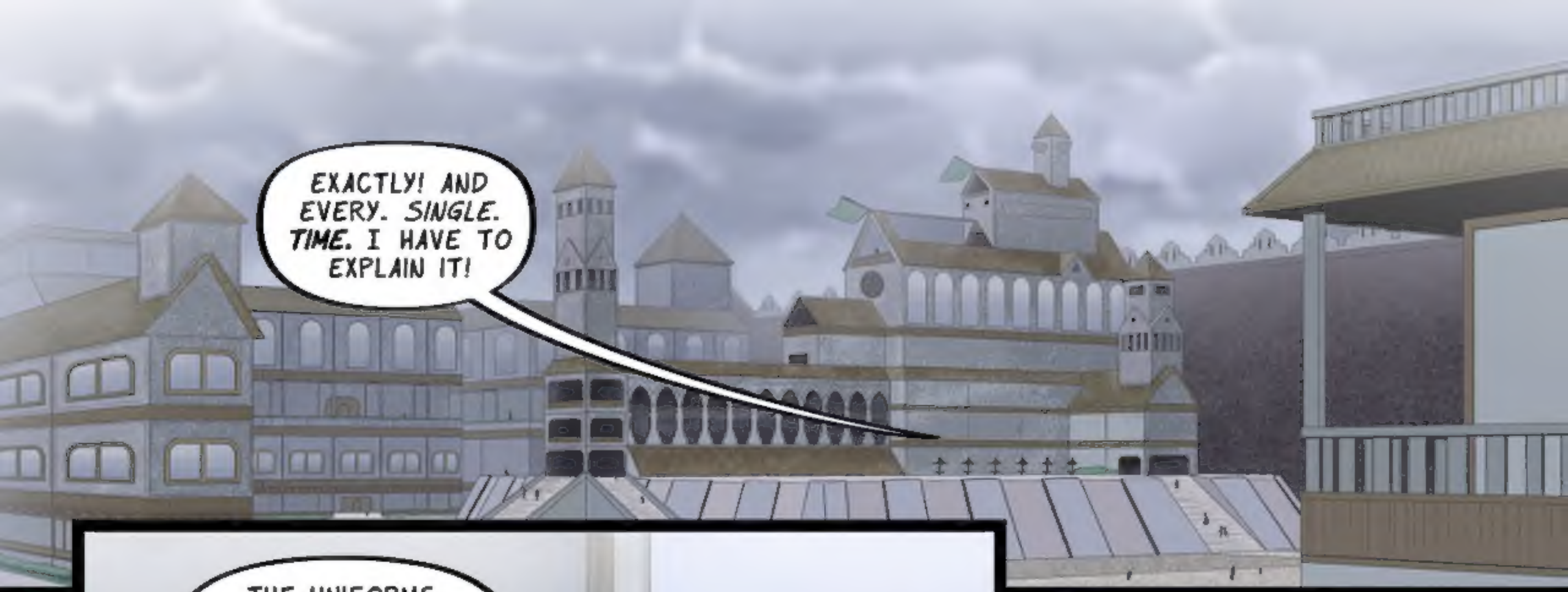
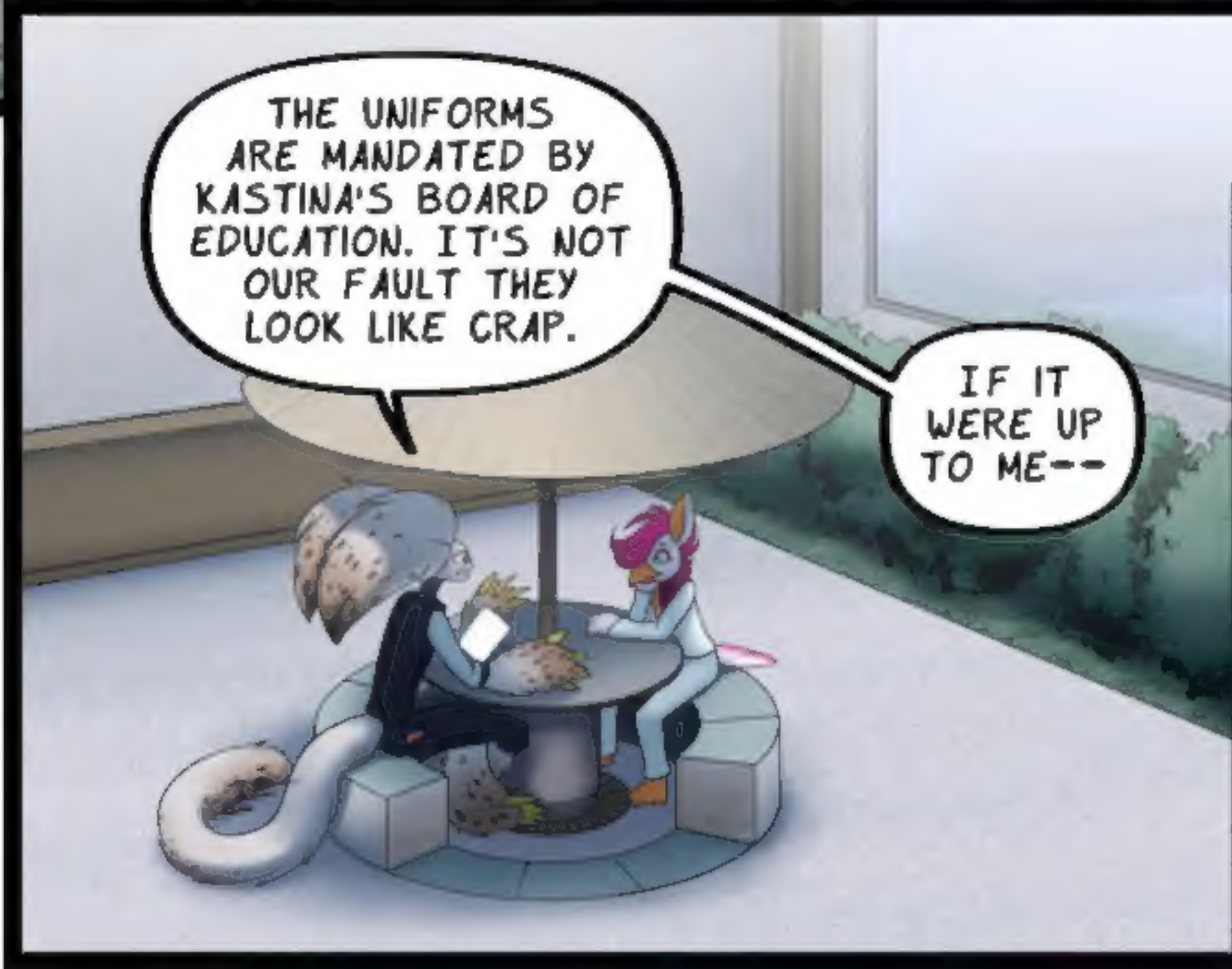




EXACTLY! AND EVERY. SINGLE. TIME. I HAVE TO EXPLAIN IT!



THE UNIFORMS ARE MANDATED BY KASTINA'S BOARD OF EDUCATION. IT'S NOT OUR FAULT THEY LOOK LIKE CRAP.

IF IT WERE UP TO ME--



UHH... HEY, YOU OK?



BWAUHH!



TARAFI?





OH, DON'T
YOU WORRY
ABOUT THAT.

JUST BE A
GOOD BOY AND GIVE ME
YOUR BANK ACCOUNT
ACCESS CODE.

AND WHY
WOULD I--

VERY
COOPERATIVE!
EXCELLENT.

...10032
12989.

NOW, AS I
UNDERSTAND IT,
YOUR PHONE HAS
AN EAR PIECE ON
A SIDE SLOT.

PUT IT ON
AND FOLLOW MY
INSTRUCTIONS.

FIRST YOU'LL
NEED TO DROP OFF
YOUR BAGGAGE AT
THE MEDICAL CENTER.

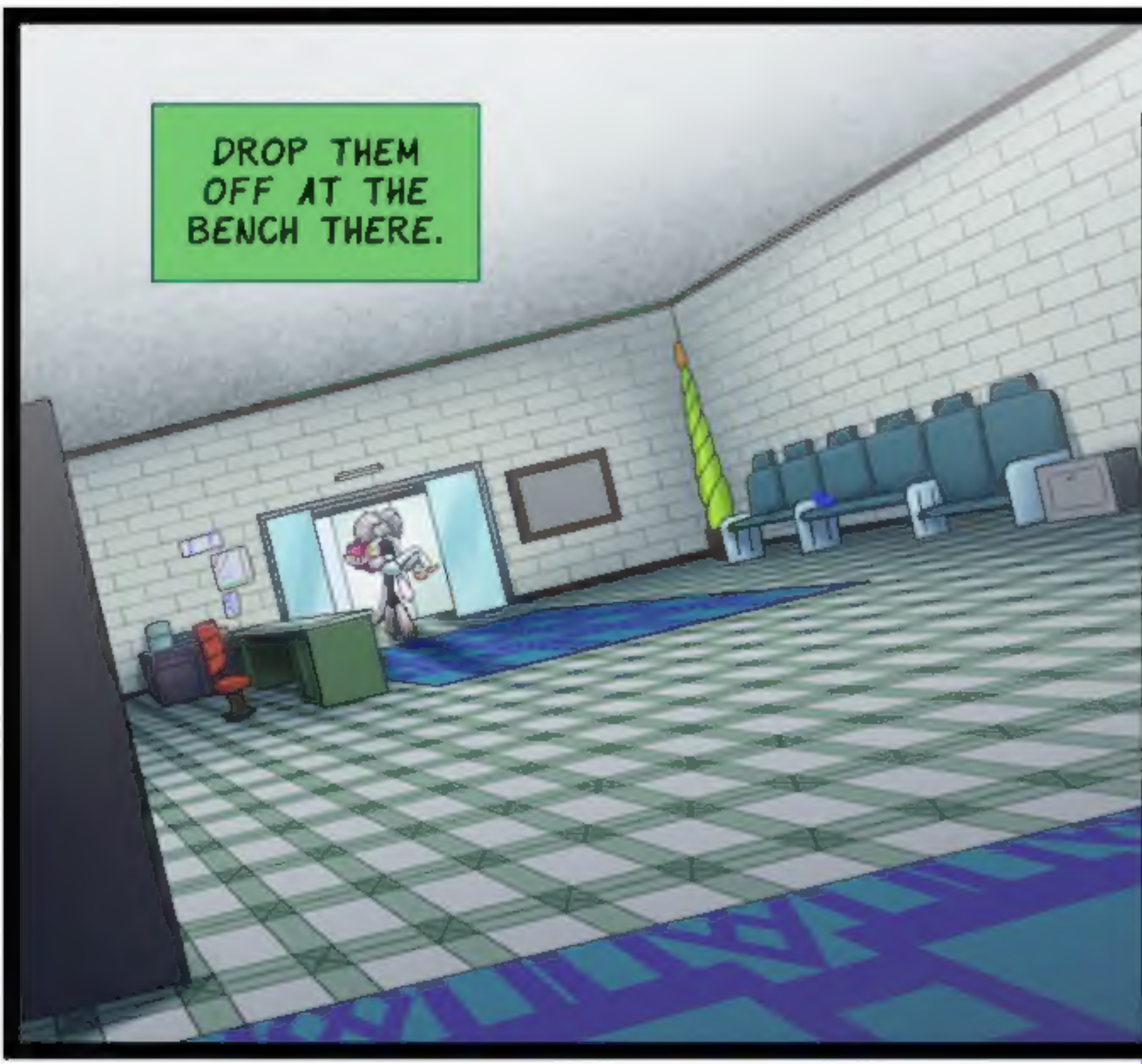


KEEP QUIET
AS YOU ENTER.

IN FACT,
DON'T SAY ANYTHING
UNLESS I TELL
YOU TO.



AH, GOOD--
MY ASSISTANT SEEMS
TO HAVE "FORGOTTEN"
THEIR BACKPACK...



DROP THEM
OFF AT THE
BENCH THERE.



TAKE THE
BACKPACK. INSIDE,
YOU'LL FIND THE TOOLS
YOU'LL NEED LATER.



NOW, TAKE YOUR TOOLS AND GO--

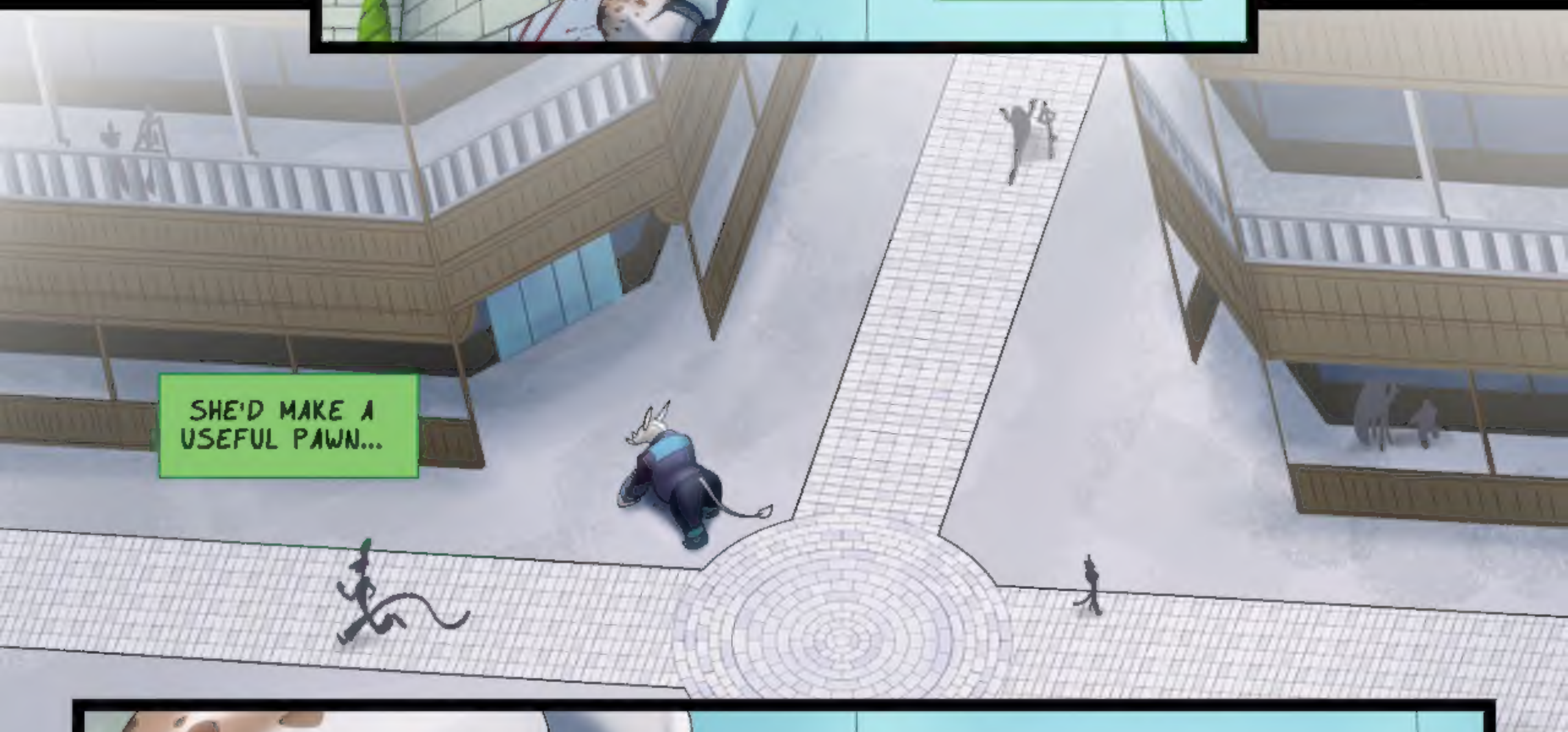


...WAIT, STOP.

OOOOOH, I SEE AN OPPORTUNITY!



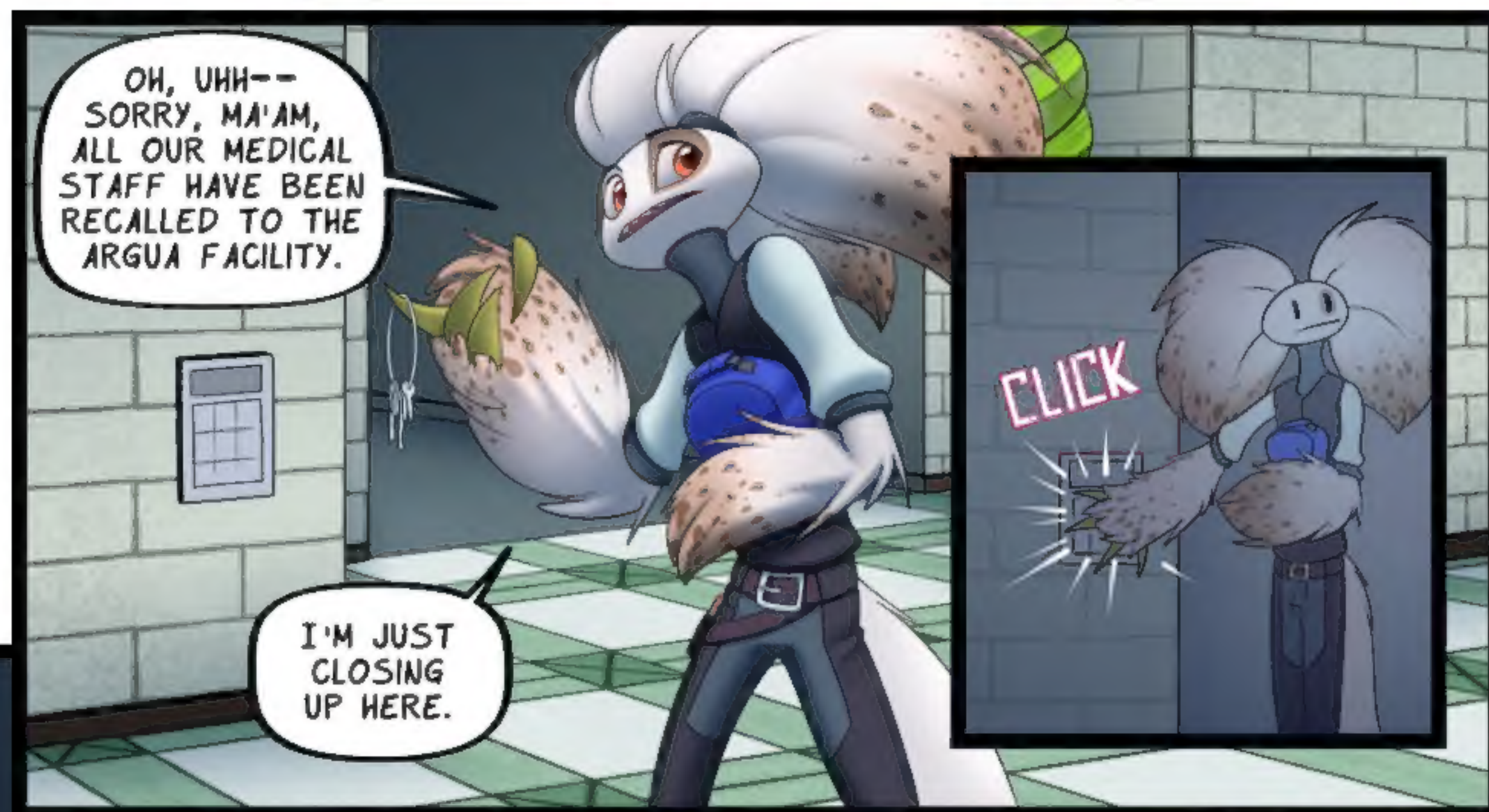
THE RHO-DA AGNA SEEMS TO BE HEADING YOUR WAY.



SHE'D MAKE A USEFUL PAWN...



SEE IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT SHE WANTS. IF YOU CAN SEND HER TO THE ARGUA HOSPITAL, THAT WOULD BE FANTASTIC.





OH, S-SEE,
THIS IS JUST
A CLINIC...?

AND THEY'RE
ALL BUSY OVER
THERE TREATING
A FLU THAT'S
GOING AROUND--



WHICH, I'D
ACTUALLY GET
YOUR FRIEND
CHECKED FOR
THAT. SO...

...GUHH



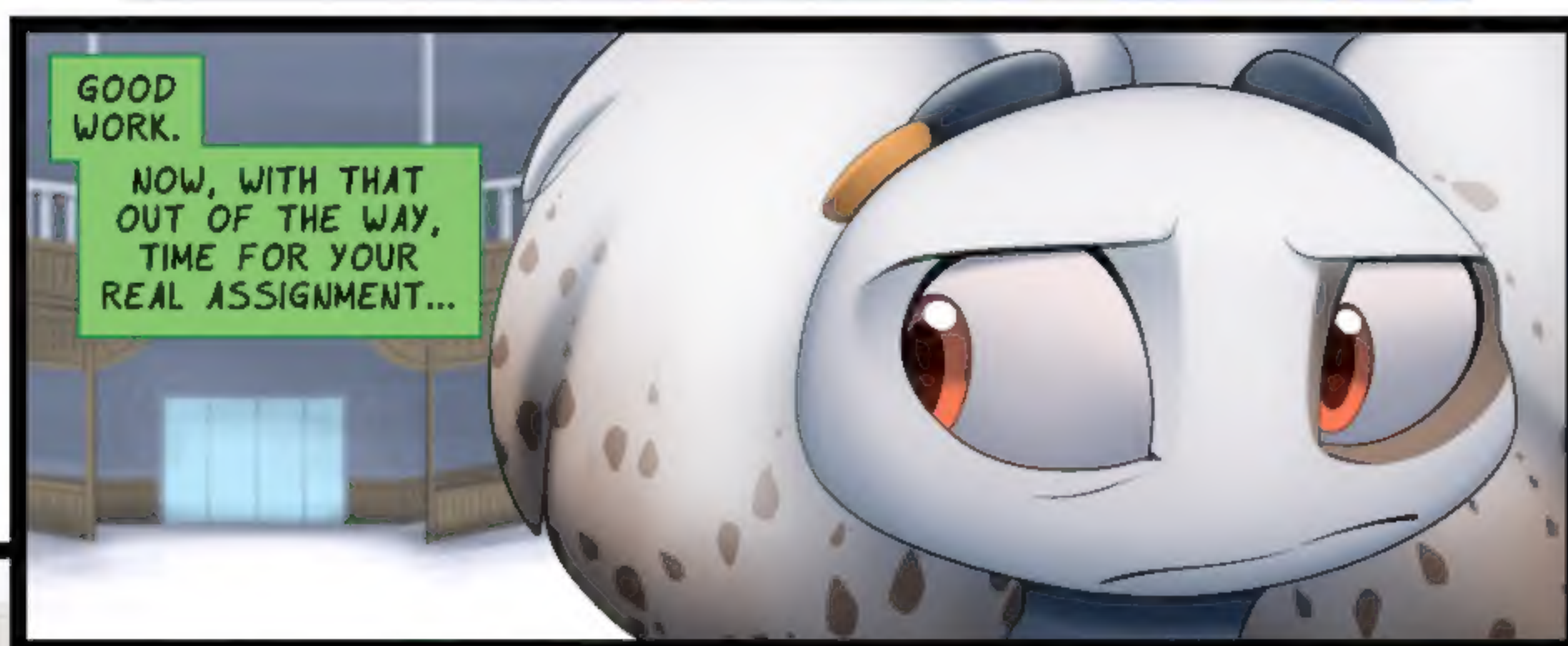
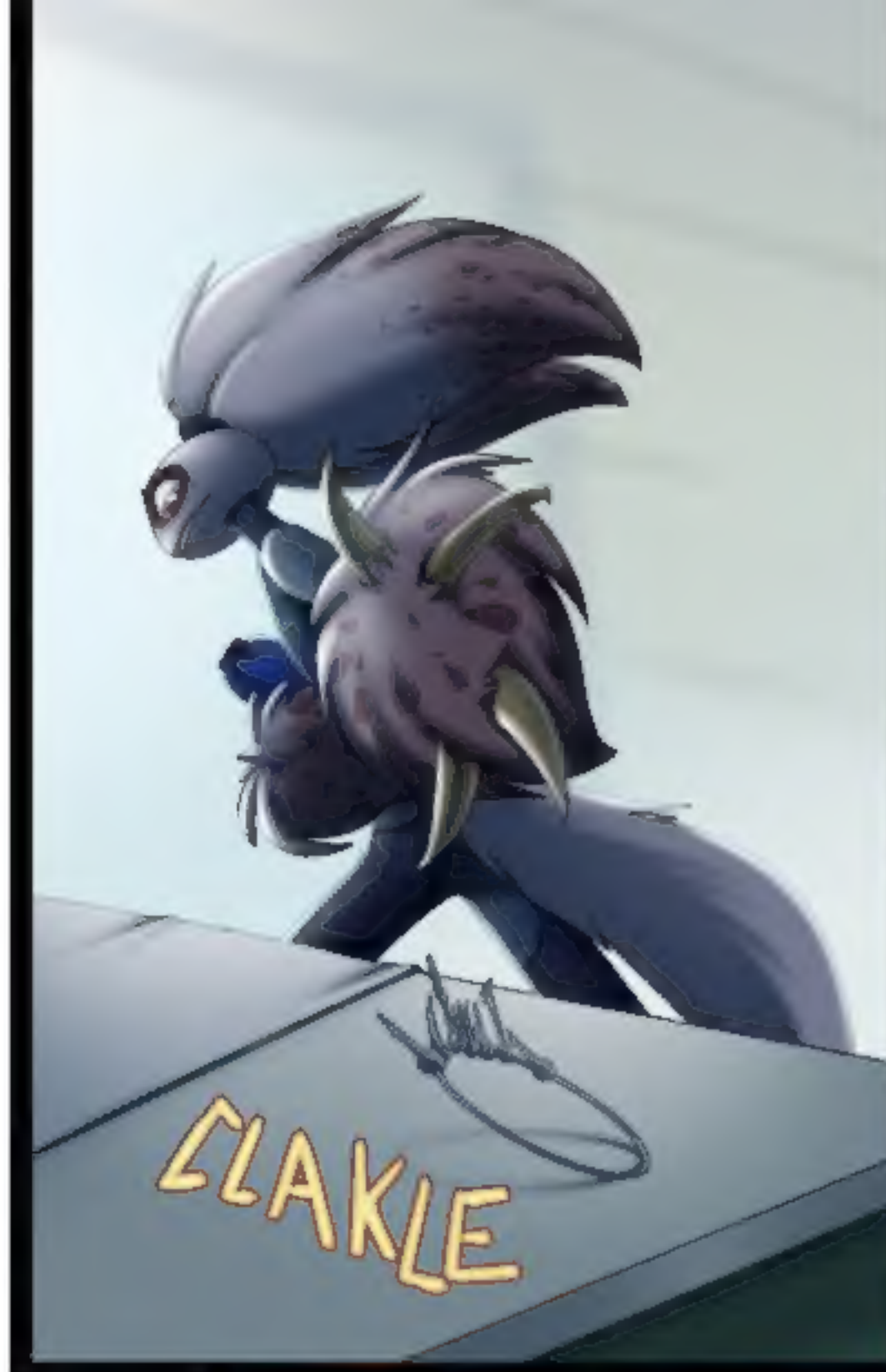
AIN'T THAT
JUST MY LUCK.

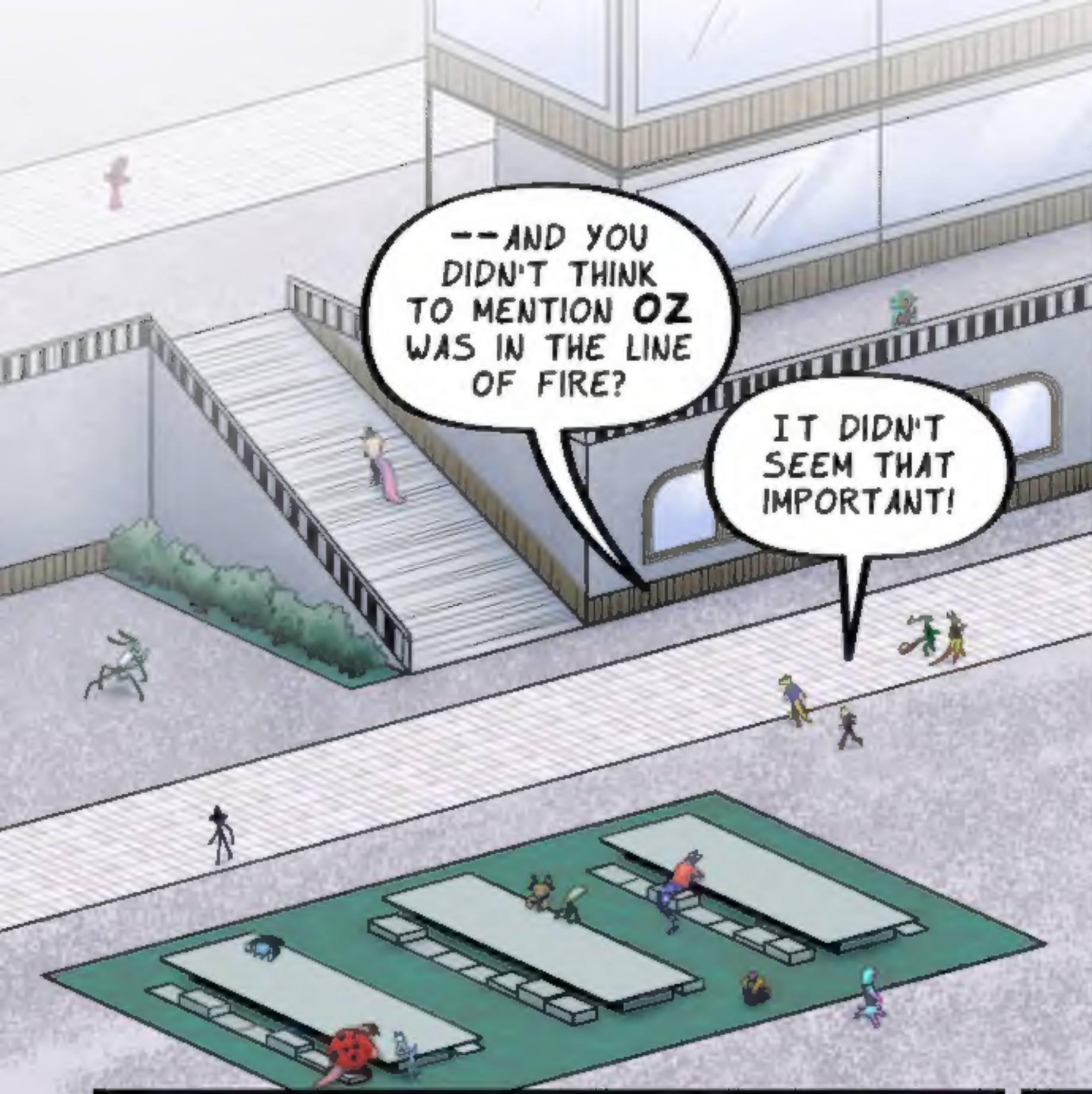
ARRRIGHT, BUCKO,
LOOKS LIKE I'M
HAULING YOU A FEW
MORE KILOMETERS.



CH-CLAK

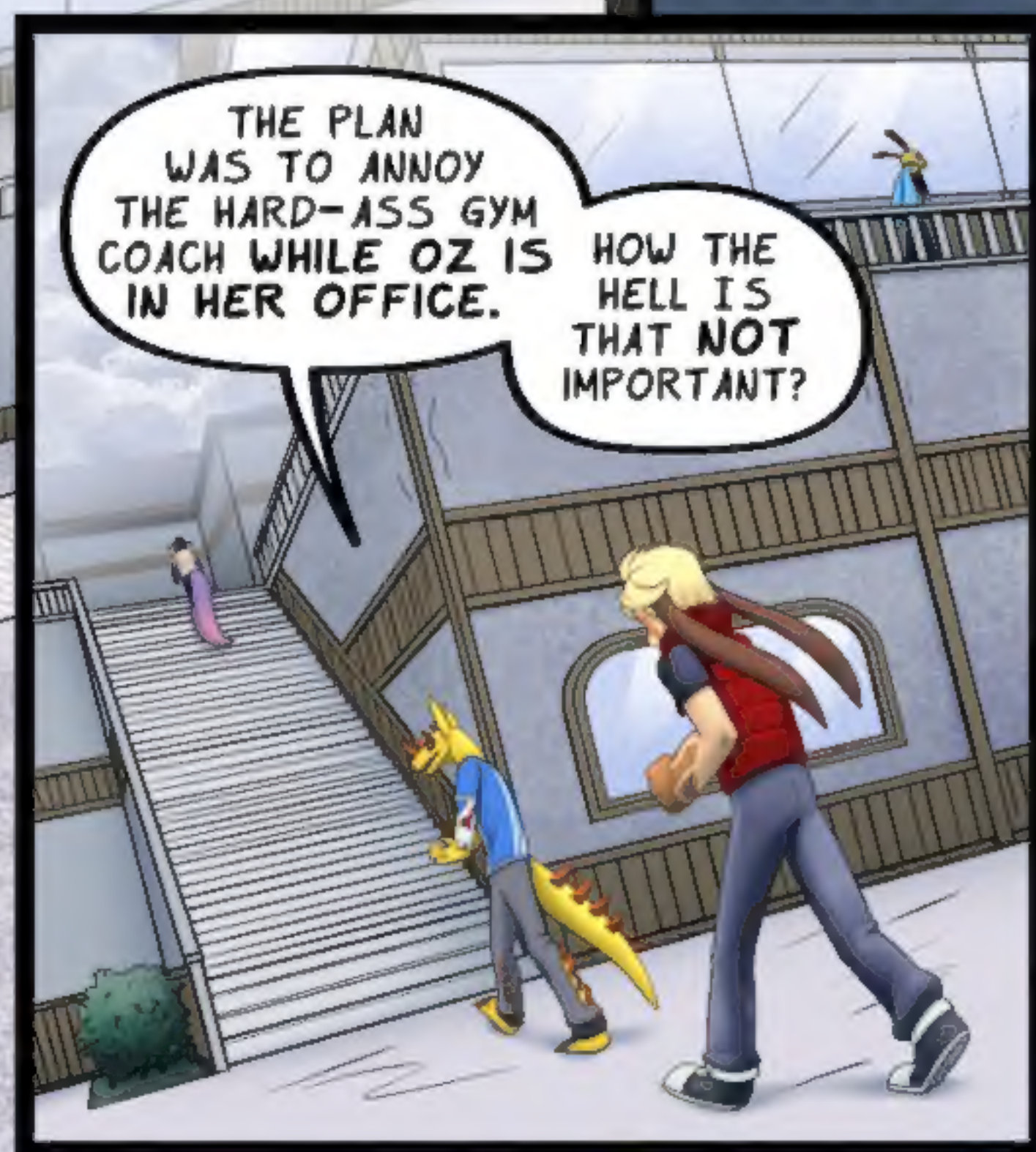
HAAAAA
A A A A A





--AND YOU DIDN'T THINK TO MENTION OZ WAS IN THE LINE OF FIRE?

IT DIDN'T SEEM THAT IMPORTANT!



THE PLAN WAS TO ANNOY THE HARD-ASS GYM COACH WHILE OZ IS IN HER OFFICE.

HOW THE HELL IS THAT NOT IMPORTANT?



NO, THAT'S-- OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT. THAT'S ON ME.

SO LET ME HANDLE--

I DON'T CARE WHO IT'S ON, DUDE.



HE'S FREAKING OUT. I'M GONNA GO HELP HIM.

LISTEN, THIS IS A MESS ALREADY --

THE LESS PEOPLE INVOLVED, THE BETTER.

JUST STAY OUT OF IT.



STAY OUT? TOO LATE FOR THAT, YOU USED ME TO GET MY FRIEND HURT.

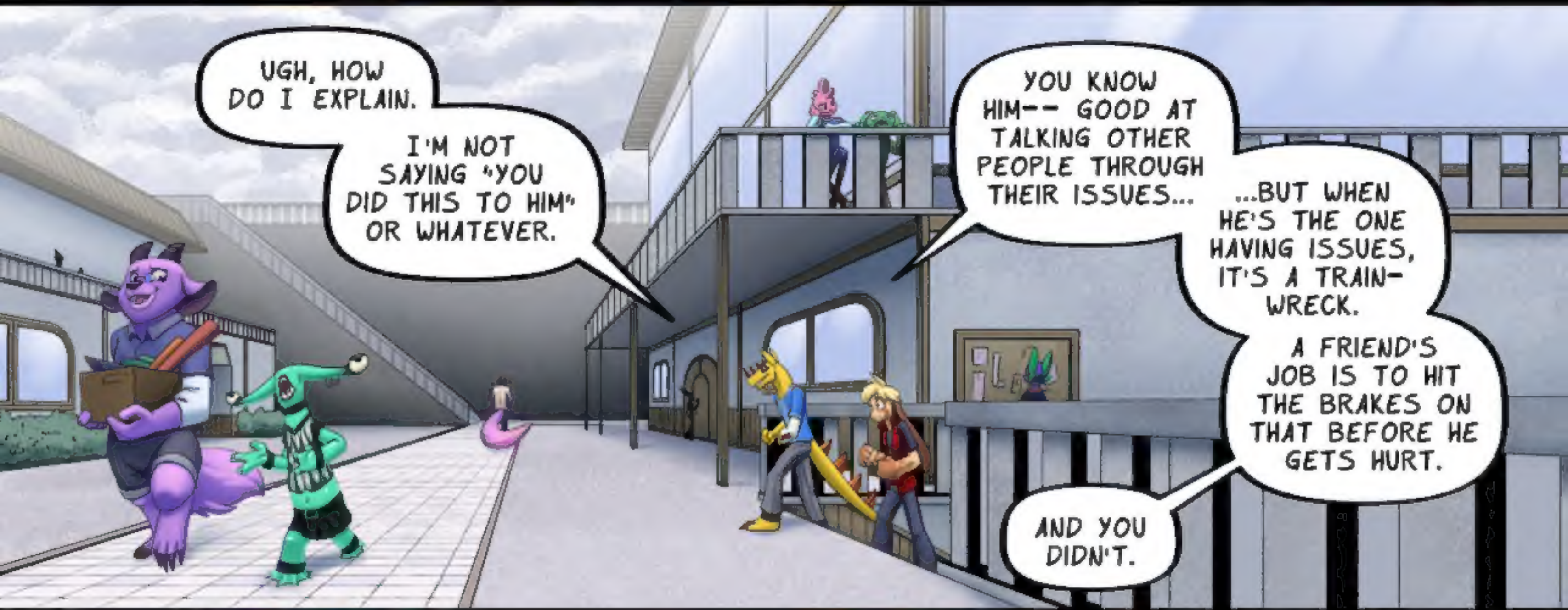


HEY, DON'T
FRAME THIS LIKE
IT'S MY FAULT
HE'S UPSET!



SORRY,
SORRY.

LOOK, I
JUST--



UGH, HOW
DO I EXPLAIN.

I'M NOT
SAYING "YOU
DID THIS TO HIM"
OR WHATEVER.

YOU KNOW
HIM-- GOOD AT
TALKING OTHER
PEOPLE THROUGH
THEIR ISSUES...

...BUT WHEN
HE'S THE ONE
HAVING ISSUES,
IT'S A TRAIN-
WRECK.

A FRIEND'S
JOB IS TO HIT
THE BRAKES ON
THAT BEFORE HE
GETS HURT.

AND YOU
DIDN'T.



ALL YOU
DID WAS
ENABLE HIM.



ENABLE?

YEAH. SEE,
EVERYONE KNEW
OZ WAS RUNNING
AROUND SULKING
ABOUT SOMETHING.

BUT IT DIDN'T
SEEM TO BE
ESCALATING SO WE
FIGURED "HEY, MAYBE
HE JUST NEEDS
A MINUTE."

FLASH FORWARD
AND I FIND OUT
YOU'RE HELPING HIM
COMMIT BURGLARY AND
OPENLY CLASH WITH
A TEACHER!

AND NOW
LOOK AT HIM --
HE'S ACTUALLY
FREAKING OUT.

TAP TAP TAP

ANYWAY, YOU
DRAGGED ME
INTO THIS.

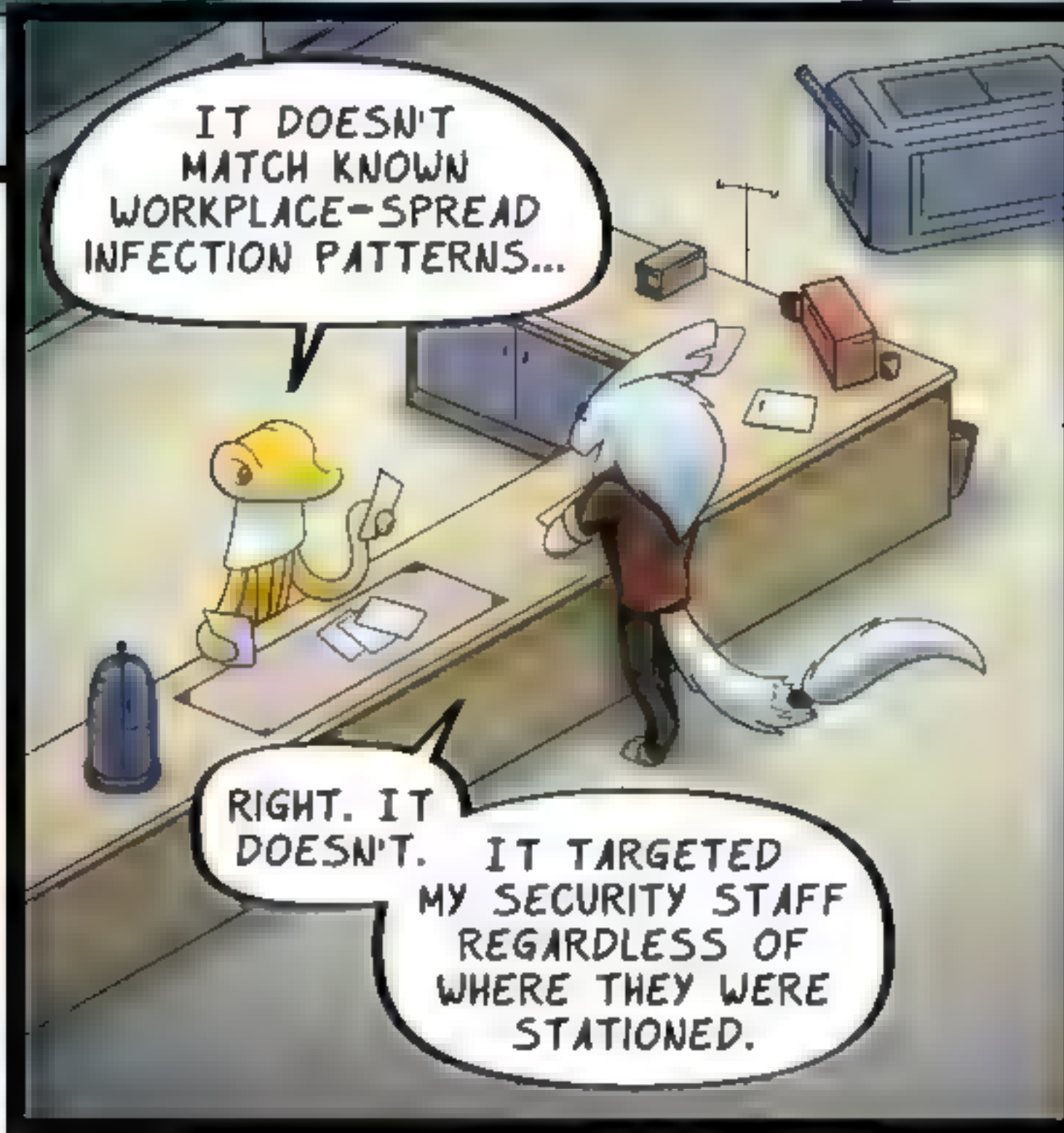
SO NOW
WE HELP HIM
MY WAY.

BUT I--

SHUSH. NEED
TO LISTEN.



YOU'RE SURE
THIS CASE
BREAKDOWN IS
ACCURATE, SIR?



IT DOESN'T
MATCH KNOWN
WORKPLACE-SPREAD
INFECTION PATTERNS...

RIGHT. IT
DOESN'T. IT TARGETED
MY SECURITY STAFF
REGARDLESS OF
WHERE THEY WERE
STATIONED.



...HM.
FINISH FILLING
THOSE OUT, SIR.
I'LL PASS THIS ON
TO DR. SARAN.
WAIT HERE.



HEY, OZ.
SORRY, I
CAN'T--



SOB

...ARE YOU
CRYING?
WHAT'S
WRONG,
KIDDO?

Z, THOTZEV'S
GONNA RAID THE
SCHOOL. I CAN
PROVE IT.

WHAT?

I WENT IN
HER OFFICE
AND FOUND HER
BATTLE ARMOR.

YOU
WHAT--?!

BUD, DO YOU
HAVE ANY IDEA
HOW MUCH TROUBLE
YOU JUST GOT
YOURSELF INTO?

WHO
CARES?! SHE'S
DANGEROUS!

OZ, DEEP
BREATH.
LISTEN.
THIS ISN'T
SOMETHING WE
CAN JUST DISCUSS
OVER THE PHONE,

AND ESPECIALLY
NOT IN PUBLIC, SO
YOU'RE GOING TO
MEET ME LATER.

I'LL... EXPLAIN
WHAT I CAN.

WHAT DO YOU
MEAN, EXPLAIN?
SHE'S ARMED TO
THE TEETH! I TOOK
A PICTURE--

--OF HER
PERSONAL PROPERTY?
OZ. A KNIGHT'S
ARMOR IS HER
SECOND SKIN.

WEREN'T WE
SUPPOSED TO
TALK TO NAZURET
ABOUT THIS?



WE ALREADY KNEW ABOUT THAT.





...AND THAT'S
NOT AT ALL
SUSPICIOUS?

AND YOU
DIDN'T EVEN
WARN ME?



NO. SHE
HAS THE RIGHT
TO BRING
HER STUFF.

NOBODY BUT
NAZURET CAN
VETO WHAT
SHE BRINGS.

PRIVACY
LAWS ARE
A THING.



WH--

SINCE WHEN
DOES NAZURET
CARE ABOUT LAWS?



SHH SH
SHHH, OZI!

IN CASE
YOU FORGOT, OUR
SECURITY SYSTEMS
ARE CURRENTLY
COMPROMISED.

NOW, I'M
GOING TO SAY
THIS ONCE, SO
LISTEN CAREFULLY.

THOTZEV IS
NOT A CONCERN.

WE ARE
GOING TO TALK
ABOUT THIS, AND
CONVINCE HER TO TELL
YOU EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO KNOW
TO FEEL SAFE--

BUT WE'RE
DOING THAT AFTER
I'VE DEALT WITH THIS
SECURITY ISSUE.

BUT--

YOUR JOB
UNTIL THEN
IS SIMPLE.

FIRST, YOU'RE
GOING TO FIND
KHEIL OR AL.

THEN YOU
WILL GLUE
YOURSELF TO
THEM SO THEY
CAN KEEP AN EYE
ON YOU.

DO NOT
LEAVE THEIR
SIDE UNDER ANY
CIRCUMSTANCES UNTIL
YOU AND I GET A
CHANCE TO TALK.

UNDERSTAND?

I SAID DO YOU
UNDERSTAND?



FINE.

GOOD.

SIGH

LOOK, I'M NOT
ABANDONING YOU.
WE WILL HASH THIS
OUT, BUT RIGHT NOW
I NEED YOU TO HANG
TIGHT WHILE I CLEAR
MY PLATE.

TALK LATER,
ARRRIGHT?



YEAH...
BYE.

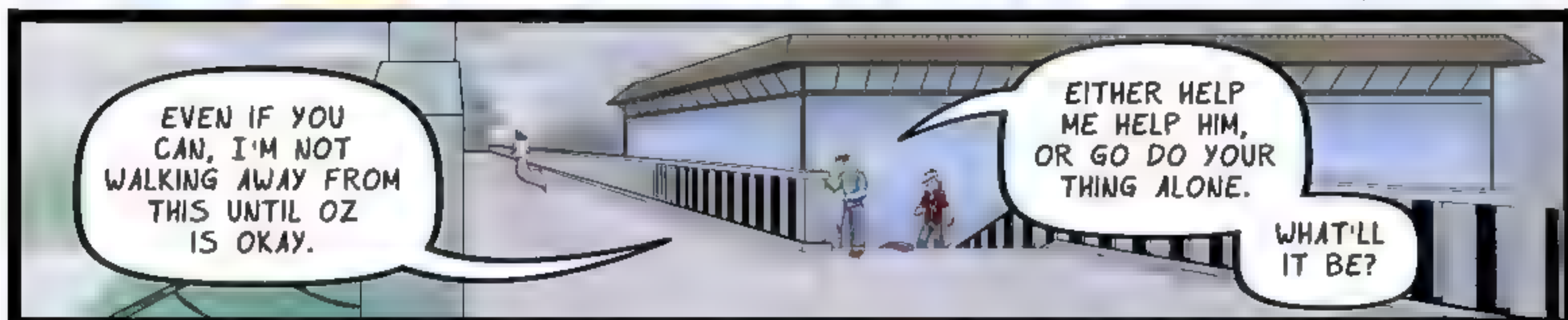
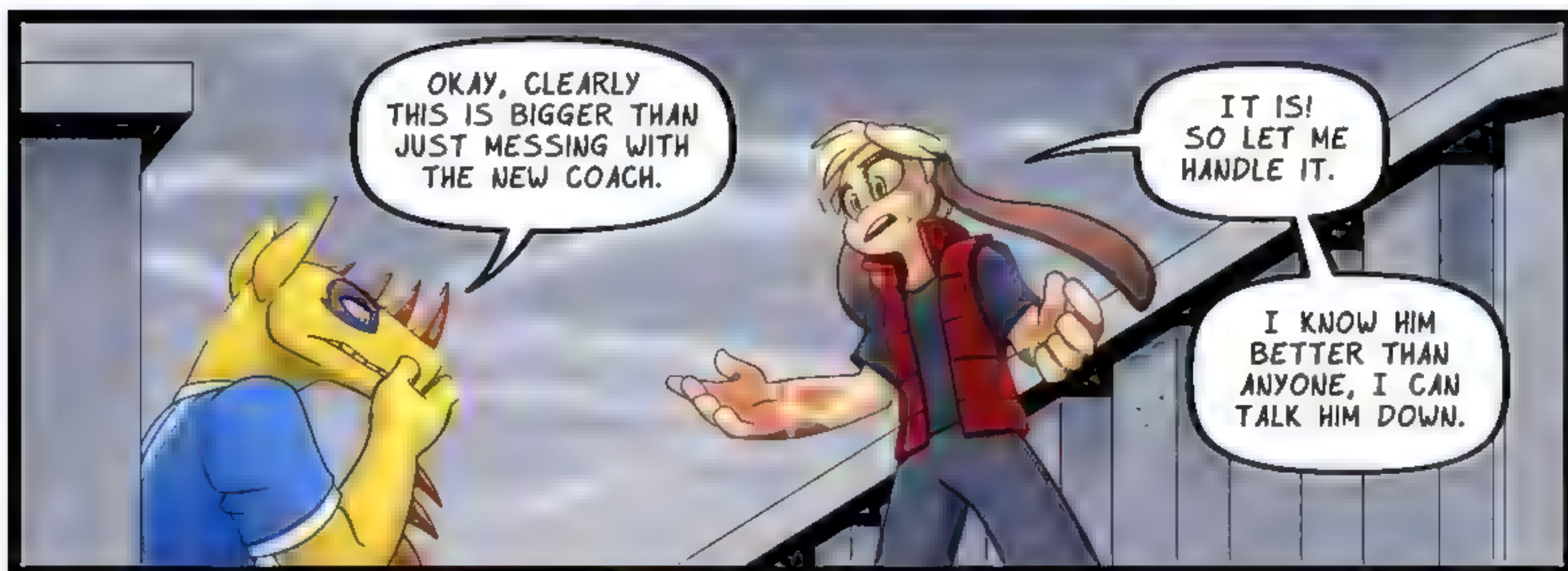


CLICK



PPMMMMNN NNGGHH







WH--?
NO!

NO, THAT'S
NOT WHAT'S NOT
WHAT I--

UGH!



HEY...
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING?



YO GUYS
OZ IS HAVING A BAD
TIME. NEED BACKUP,
WHO'S NEAR THE S.E.
WALL TOWER?

PINGING HIS
FRIENDS GROUP
CHAT FOR AN
INTERVENTION



HIS WHAT?
YOU CAN'T BRING
IN MORE PEOPLE,
I JUST SAID--



I HEARD
YOU. SO,
EXPLAIN THIS
TO ME--



WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHY WAS HE SNEAKING AROUND IN THE COACH'S OFFICE?

WHY'S HE YELLING AT THE CHIEF?



I... OKAY, LOOK, IT'S A PERSONAL THING AND HE TOLD ME IN PRIVATE.

I CAN'T JUST SPILL HIS SECRETS BECAUSE SOMEONE ASKED, Y'KNOW?



...ARRRIGHT, I RESPECT THAT.

BUT WHY'S THAT MEAN YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE ALLOWED TO HELP HIM?



I JUST... I'M HIS BEST FRIEND.

IF I CAN'T TALK HIM DOWN, WHO CAN?

LET ME TRY FIRST.

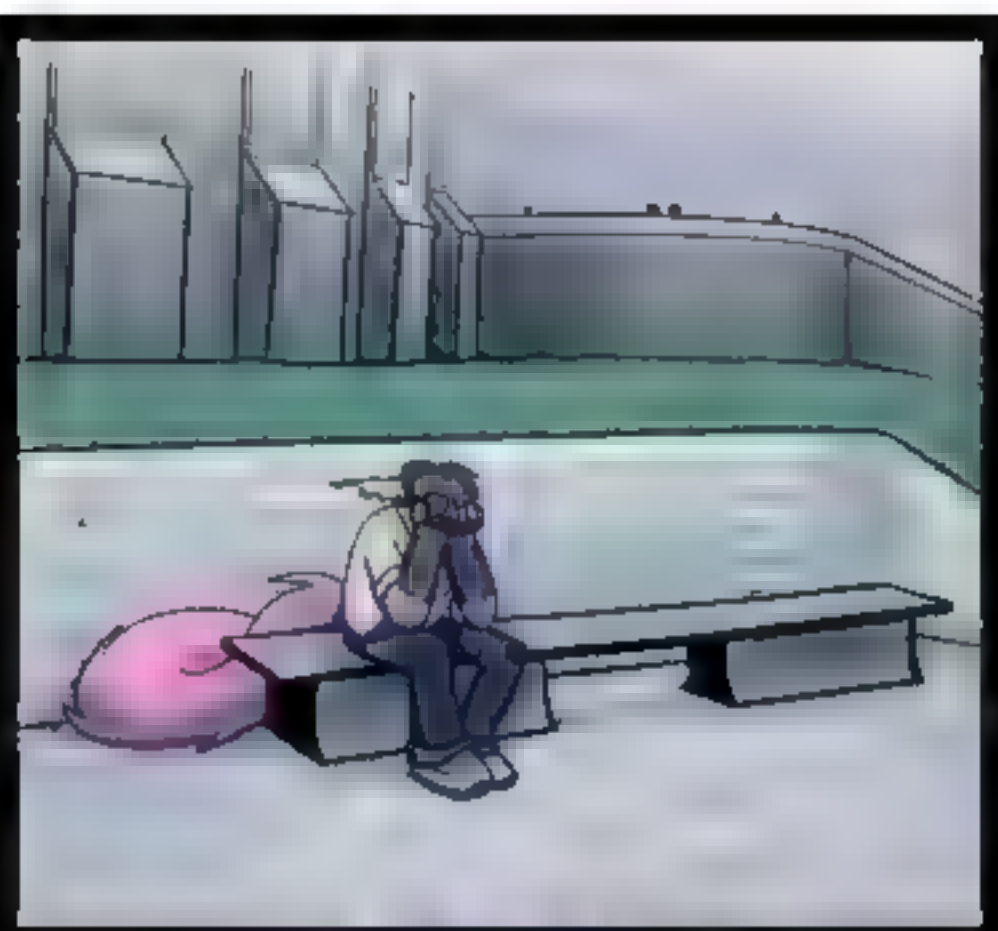
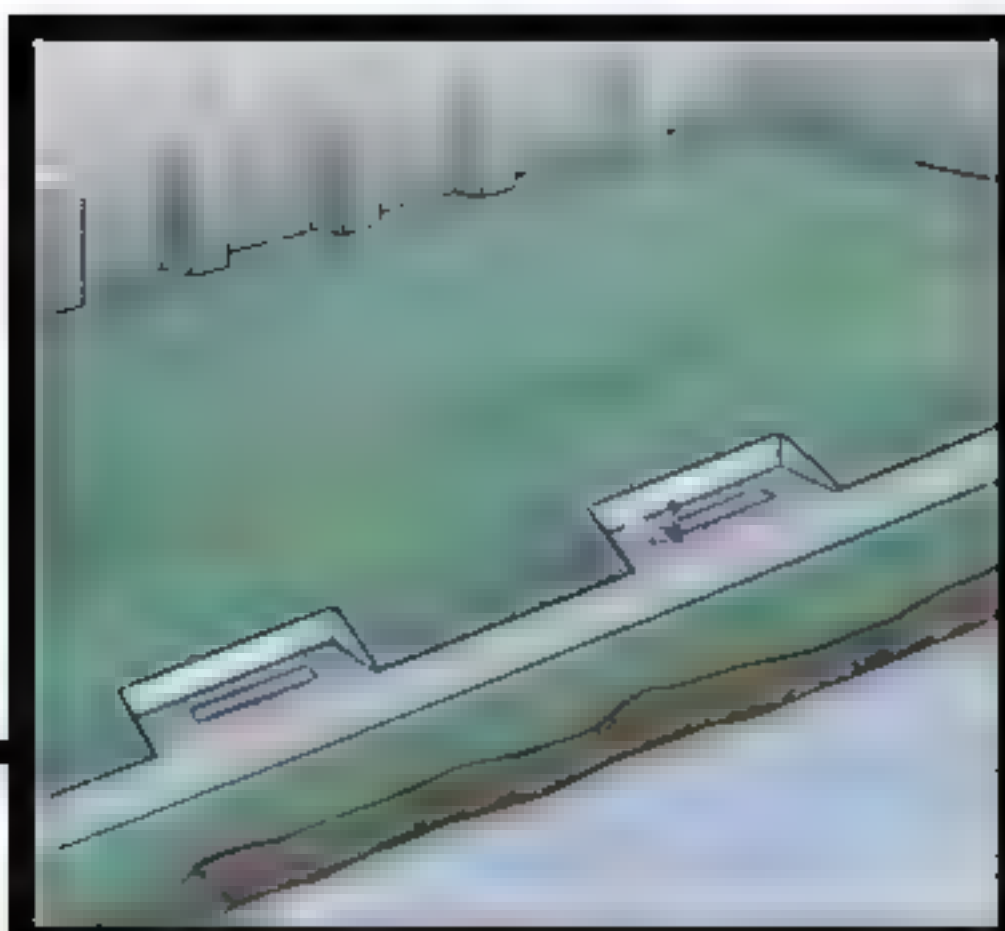


WEAK LOGIC.

BUT SURE, GO AHEAD.



I GOT THIS.



HEEEEEEEY, BUDDY, HOW YA DOING? UGH, NO, I KNOW WHAT'S UP WITH HIM. JUST, HOW DO I FIX IT?

MAYBE I CAN GET HIM TO FOCUS ON THE PLAN? IS THAT GONNA MAKE HIM FEEL BETTER? OR JUST SPLIT HIS ATTENTION AND DISTRESS HIM MORE?

I KNOW HE DON'T WANT TO, BUT MAYBE... IT COULD HELP?

OKAY, COME ON, DUDE, STOP CRYING--- WOW, NO, THAT WAS ONLY FUNNY YESTERDAY WHEN HE WAS JUST MOPING ABOUT SEEING Z. NOW IT'S JUST MEAN. GEEZ.

HELP! I'M WORRIED ABOUT SCREWING UP FOR YOU.

EVERYTHING YOU KNOW?

SOMETIMES UNI SAYS MIGHT BE HIM MORE?

GGGHHHH

IT MAY BE GET AL

MAYBE I CAN SEE SOMETHING ON WHAT Z SAID. MAYBE I CAN SEE SOMETHING NEITHER OF YOU GUYS DID? I KNOW IT'S UNLIKELY, BUT...

MORE INFORMATION ON WHAT'S GOING ON ON THEIR

DO YOU... WANT... MORE... ICE CREAM? EERGH YEAH BECAUSE THAT'S TOTALLY GONNA FIX THE PROBLEM FOR SURE!

NEBU-KHEN POWERS TO--- NOPE. NO. BAD IDEA

HANG ON, I EVEN KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THIS? HAHA, NO OF COURSE I DO. ZAEGON JUST GOT IN MY HEAD THAT'S ALL... RIGHT?

YOU SERIOUS BUT C AND IN WHAT

YOU DESERVE SO MUCH BETTER

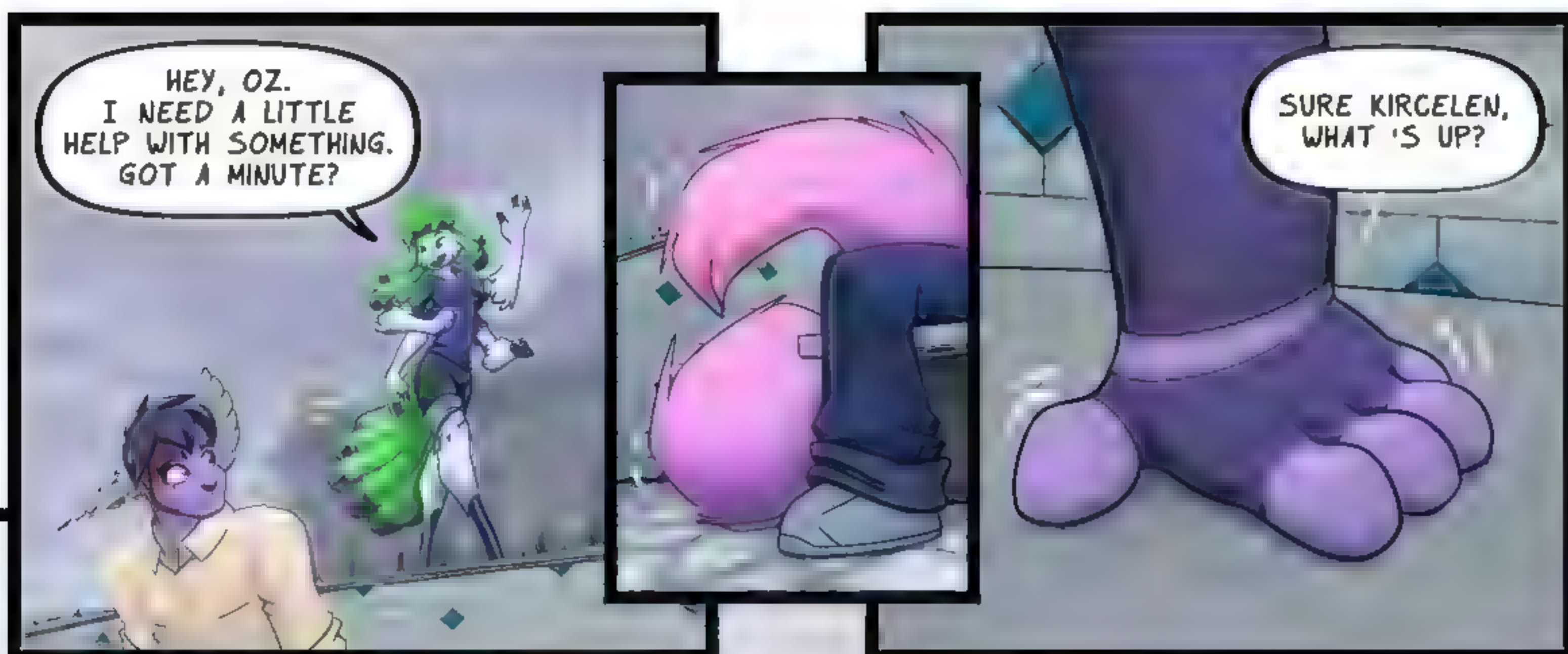
I WANT TO SUGGEST THAT WE BEAT HER UP BUT THAT WOULD PROBABLY BE THE SINGLE WORST THING TO ATTEMPT. I AM SO SORRY.

WHAT MORE IS APPROACH BUT



UH, KHEIL? YOU'VE BEEN STARING AT HIM FOR LIKE TEN MINUTES. I'M GONNA SIGNAL THE OTHERS.







SERIOUSLY, YOU CAN'T EXPECT US TO SEE YOU HAVING A MELTDOWN AND NOT SHOW UP FOR YOU.

OH, SOMEONE SUMMONED A FRIEND BOMB, DIDN'T THEY?



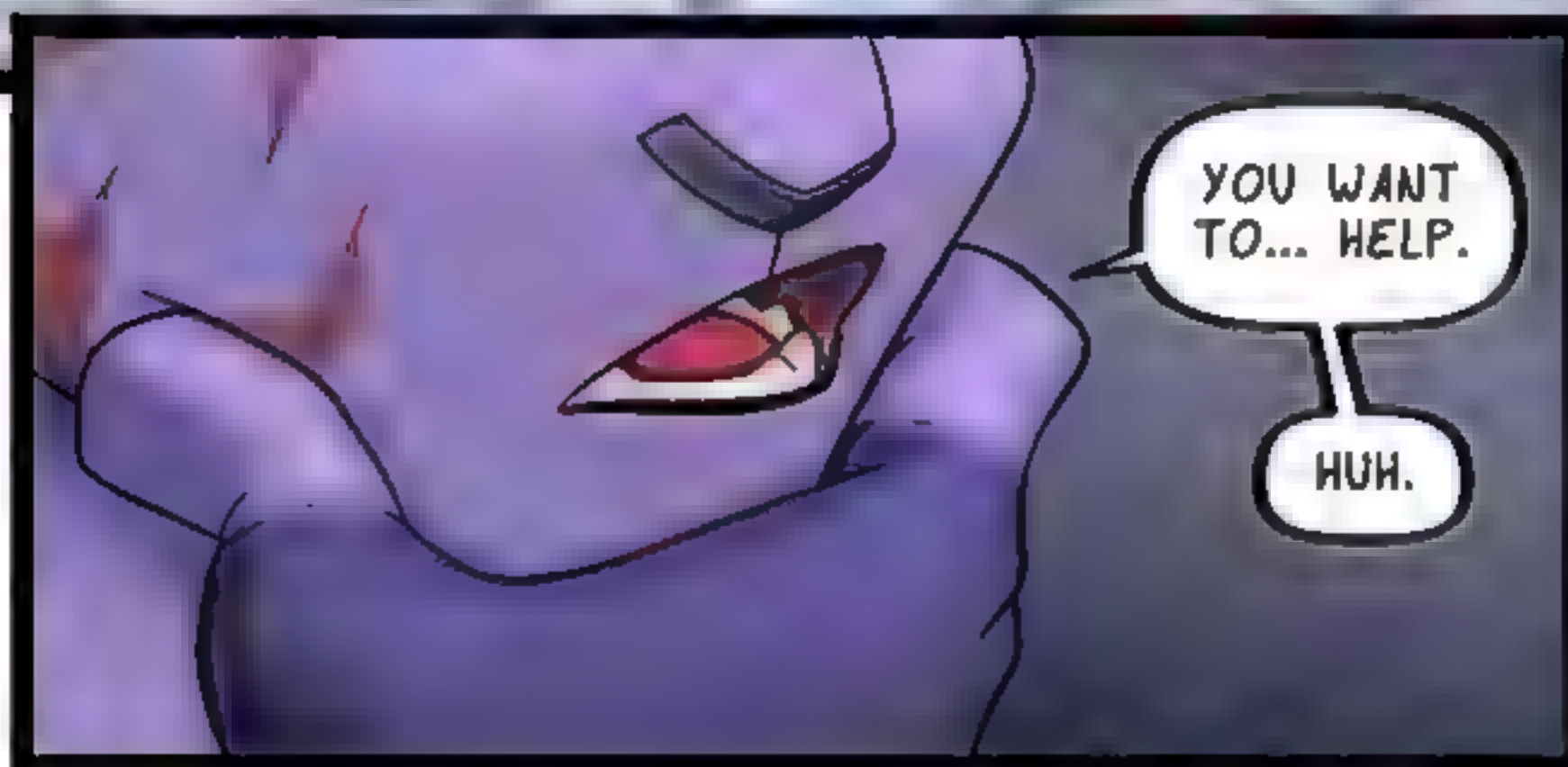
I THOUGHT I WAS BEING DISCREET.



BRUH. WE HAVE EYEBALLS.

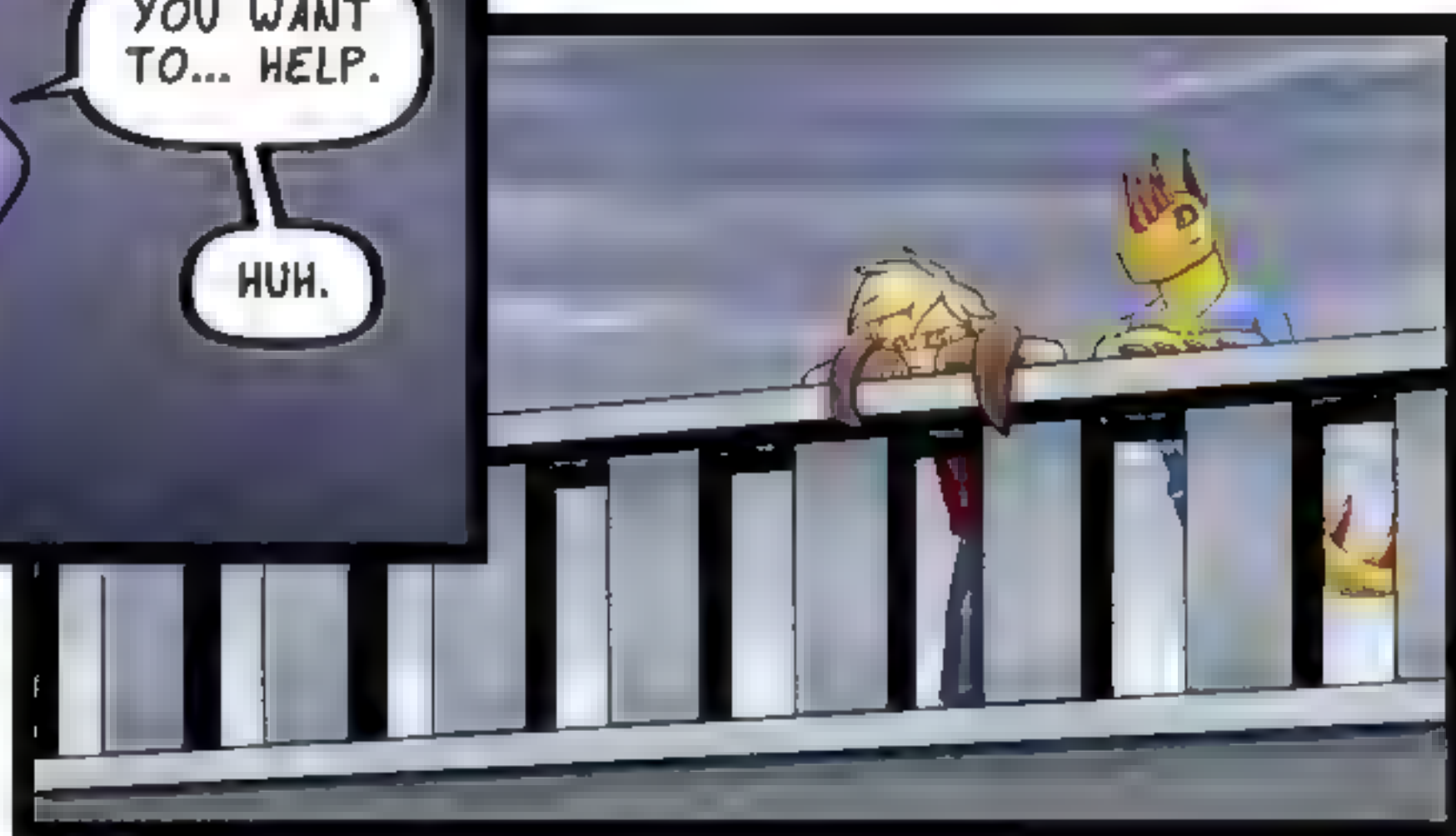
I MEAN, SOME PEEPS GOT ONE EYE, OR LIKE NO EYES EVEN, BUT WE NOTICE STUFF!

WHATEVER YOU NEED, WE'RE HERE TO HELP.



YOU WANT TO... HELP.

HUH.







DON'T NEED TO. THEY GOT IT COVERED.

SOME PEOPLE DON'T MIND SHARING THE SPOTLIGHT.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?



I MEAN SOMEONE'S WORTH AS A FRIEND DOESN'T HINGE ON BEING THE ONLY FRIEND.



SO, HERE'S A DEAL:

I BET YOU THESE GUYS GET OZ SORTED OUT WITHIN THE HOUR.

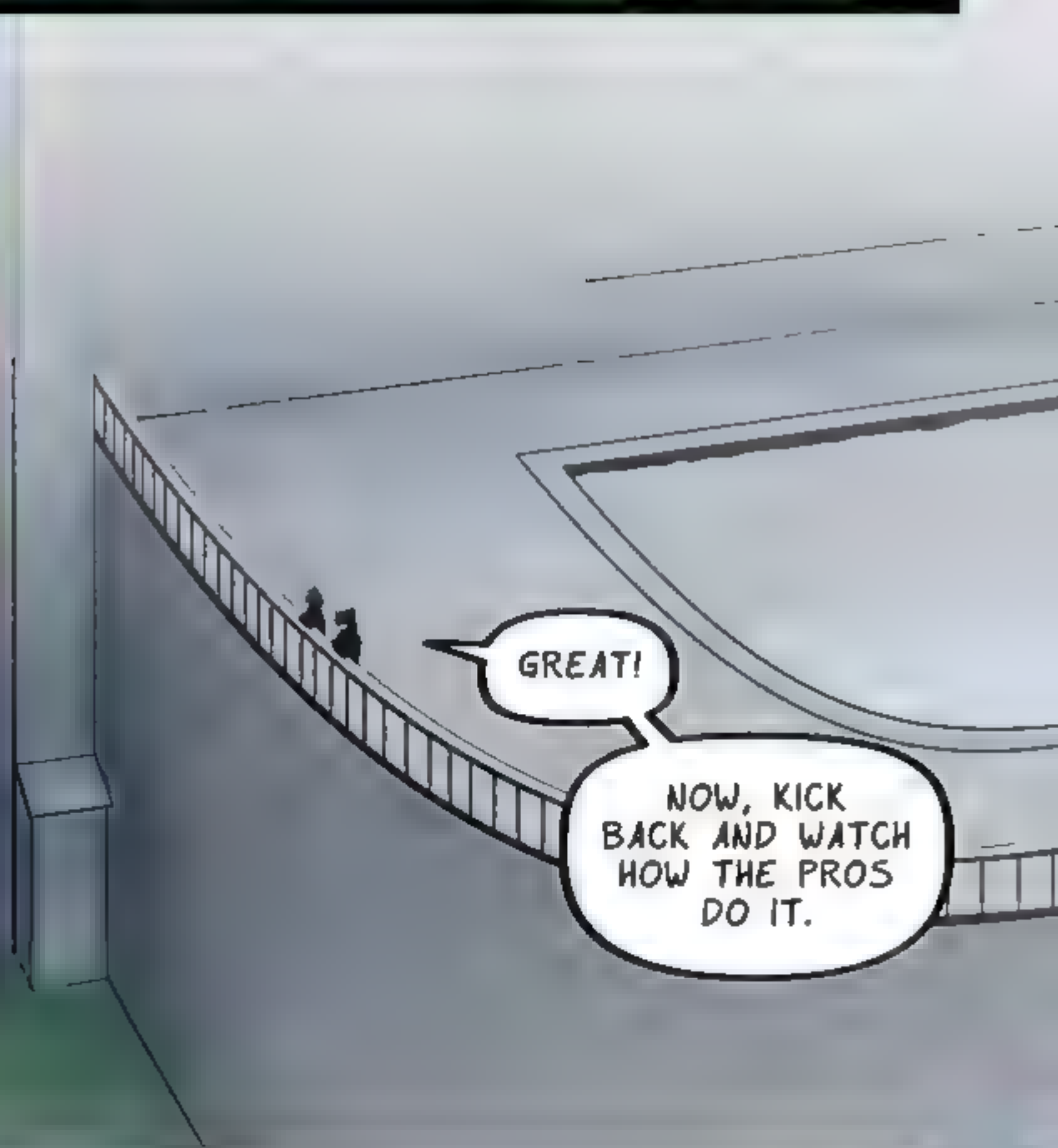
IF I'M RIGHT, HE'LL BE BACK IN ACTION FOR... WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE DOING.

IF I'M WRONG, I COME HELP YOU IN HIS PLACE SO HE CAN FOCUS ON CHILLING OUT.

DEAL?



I...UGH. FINE, DEAL.



GREAT!

NOW, KICK BACK AND WATCH HOW THE PROS DO IT.

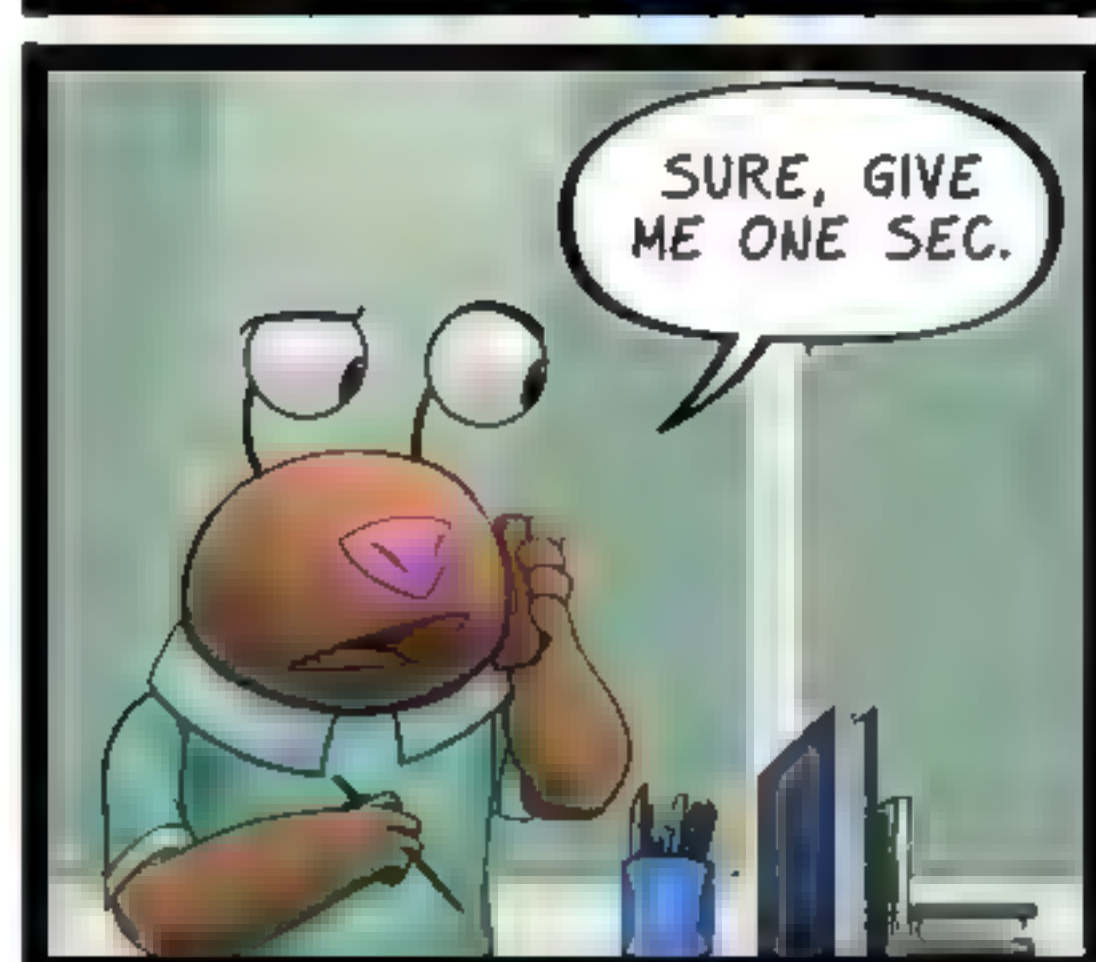
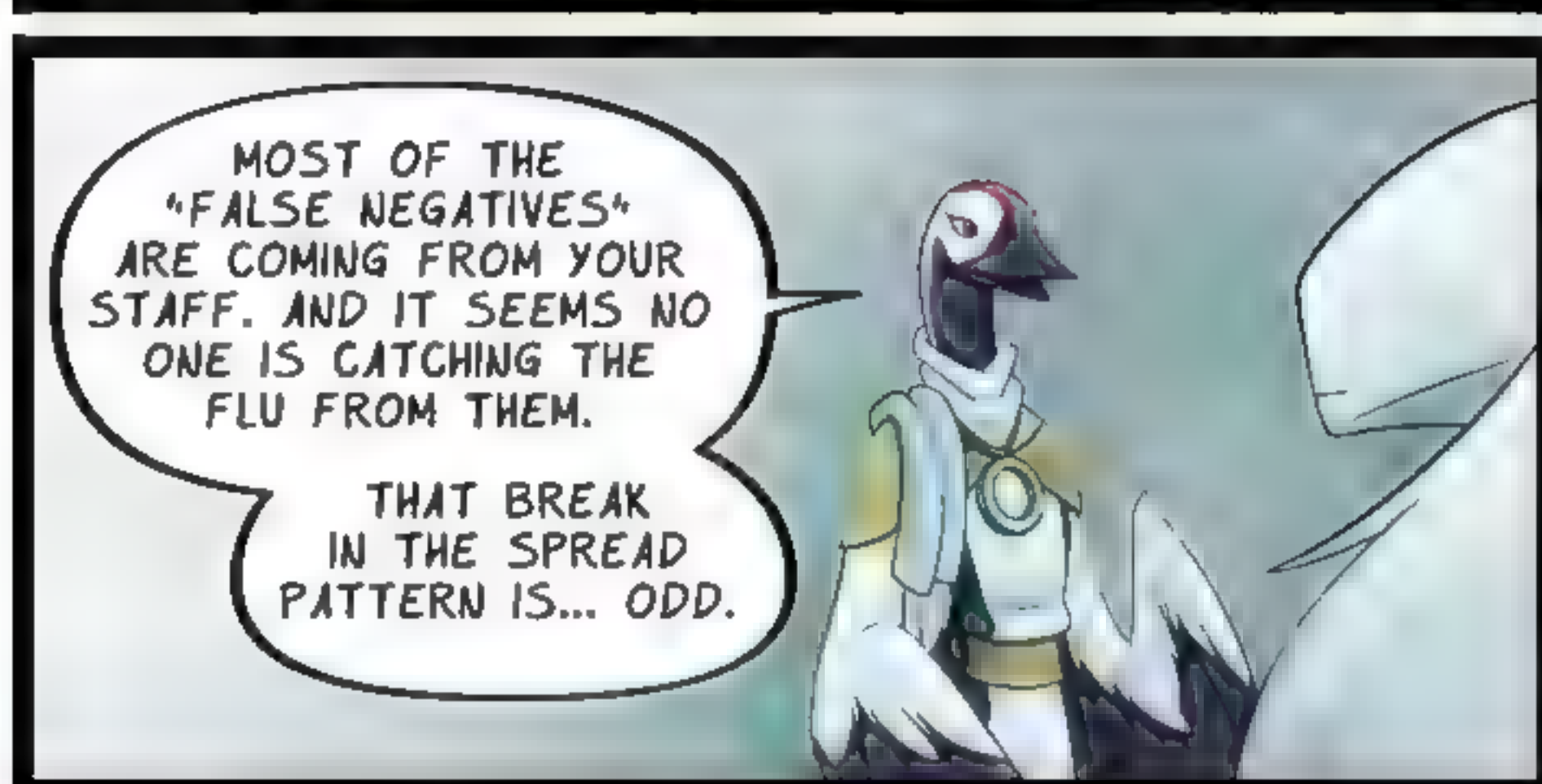
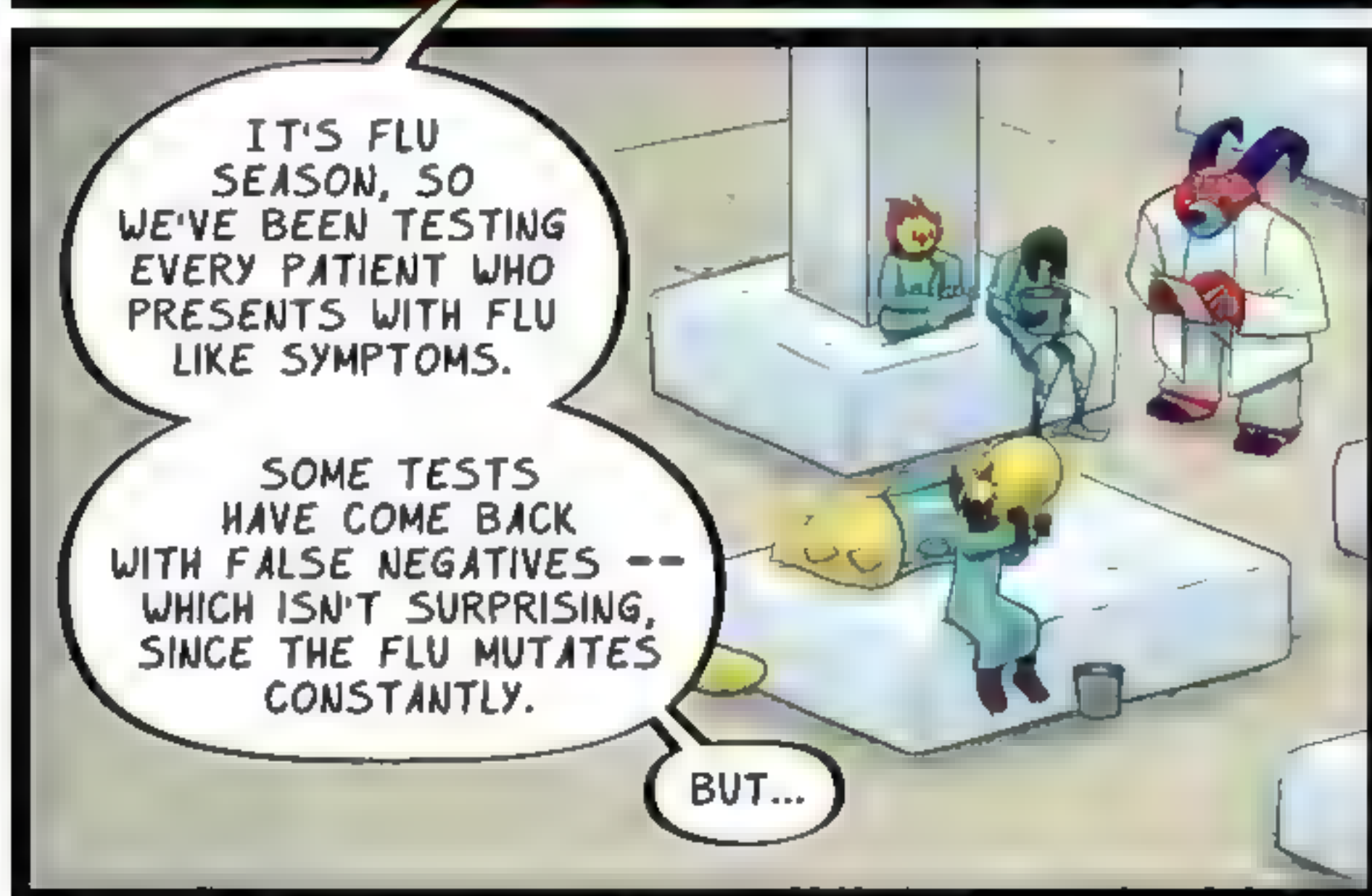
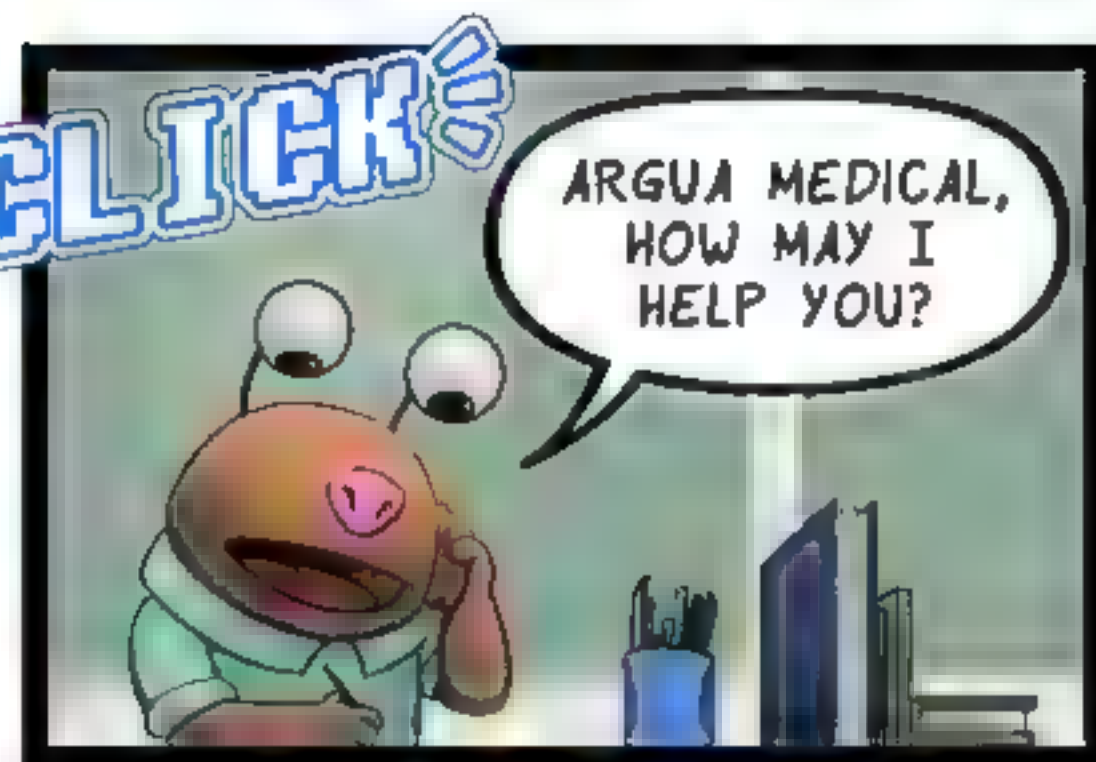
...AND THEY
SAID THIS SHIFT'S
DROWNING IN PATIENTS,
SO I THOUGHT I'D
DROP IN TO HELP.

WHICH ROTATION
NEEDS EXTRA HANDS,
RIGHT NOW?

ALL OF THEM,
YOUR TIMING
IS PERFECT.

LET'S PUT YOU
WITH INTENSIVE
CARE AND--

HI, SORRY
TO CUT IN, BUT
PLEASE TELL ME YOU
HAVE ANY UPDATES.





TARAFI
SAINRA.

SOUNDS LIKE
SHE HAS THE EXACT
SAME SYMPTOMS
AS ALL THESE FLU
CASES, BUT--

HOLD ON.
TARAFI?

SHE WAS FINE
THIS MORNING.
HOW FAST DOES THE
VIRUS PROGRESS?



NOT THAT
FAST, SIR. THE
RECEPTIONIST'S SAYING IT
WAS FOOD POISONING.

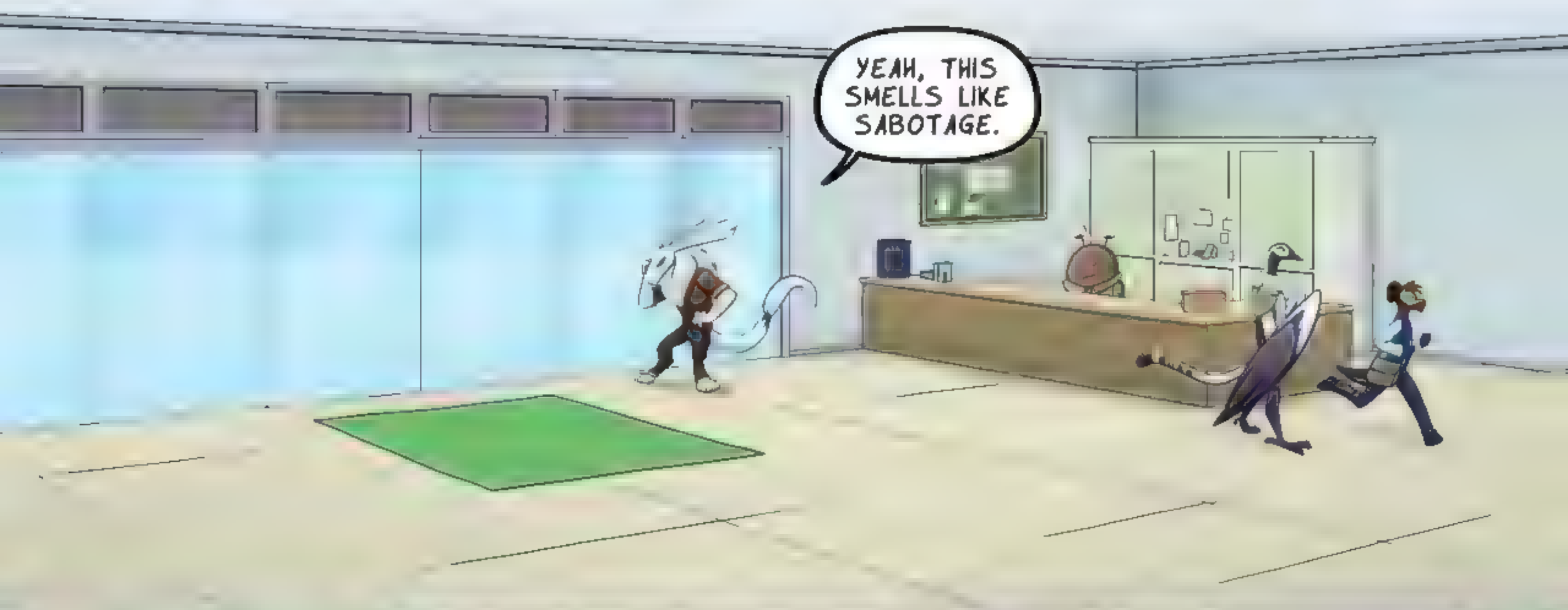
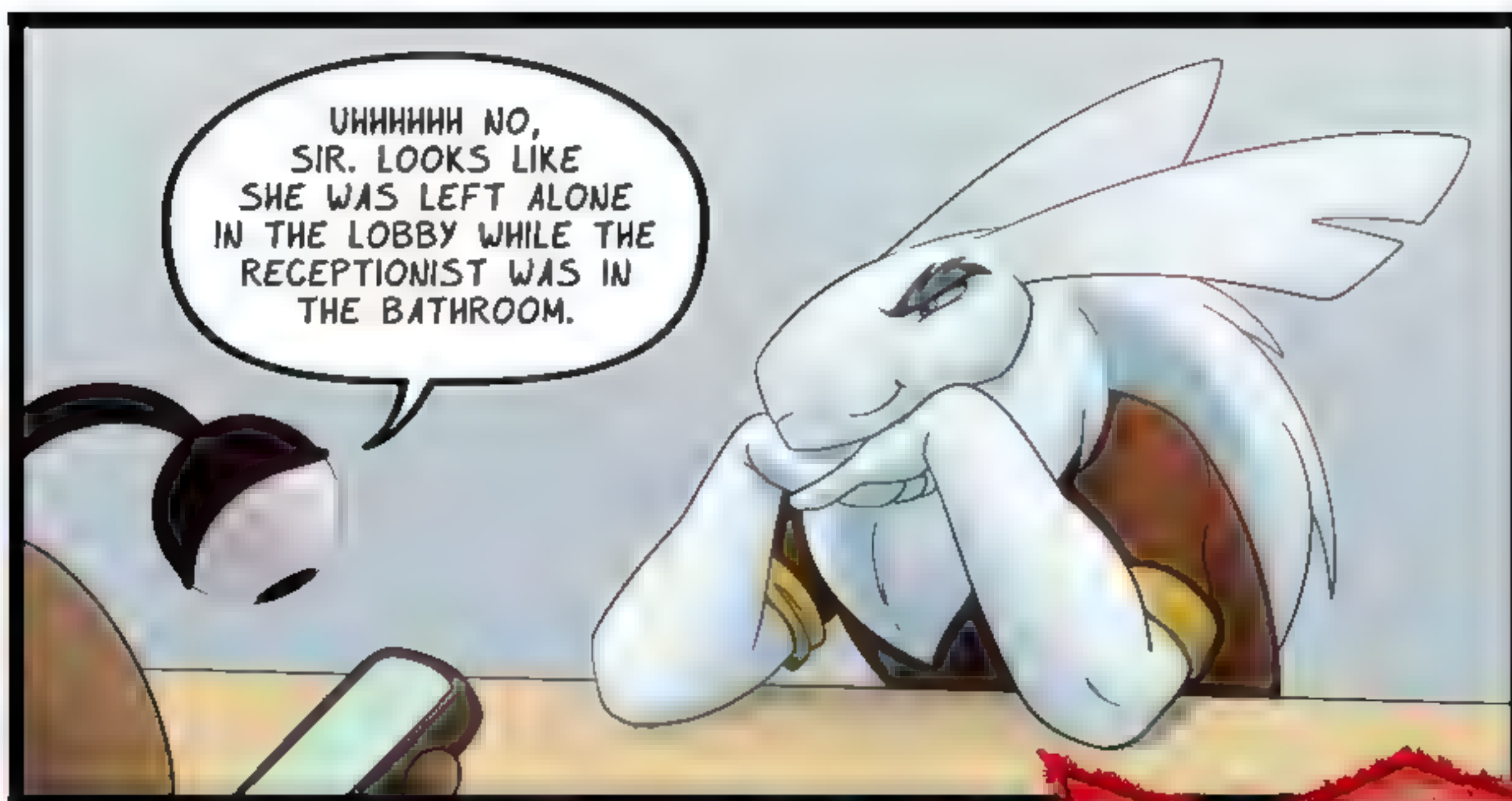


APPARENTLY SIX
OTHER STAFF DOWN
THERE HAVE COME
DOWN WITH IT IN
THE PAST HOUR.



SOMETHING ABOUT
A BAD BATCH
OF CUPCAKES.







FINE,
YOU WIN



SO, UH... HOW
COME I'M NOT IN
THAT GROUP
CHAT THING?

...WITH
EVERYONE
ELSE?

ARE YOU
SERIOUS?

YEAH.



KHEIL, TWO YEARS
AGO I PERSONALLY
SENT THE INVITE TO
YOU AND AL.

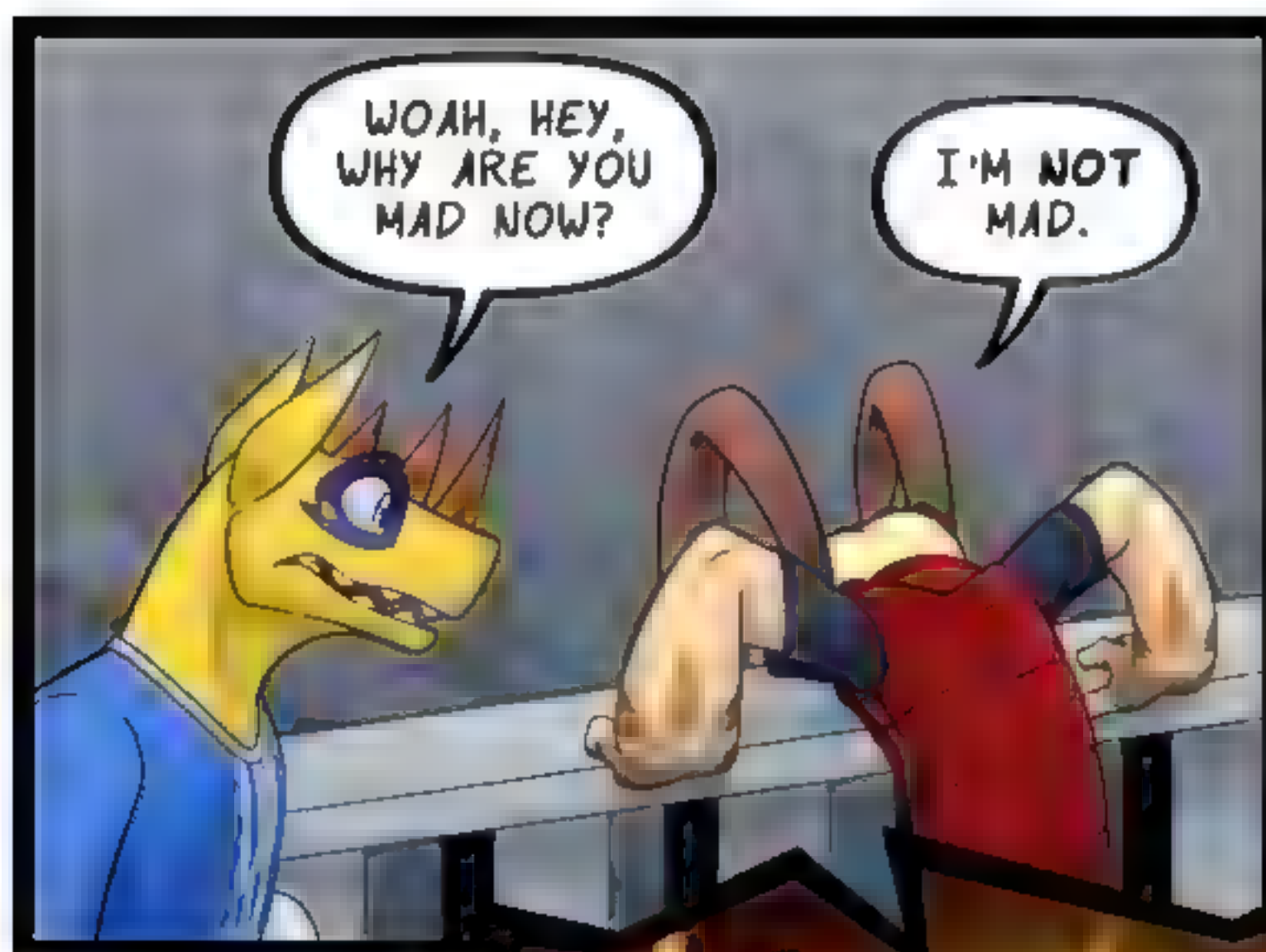
AL SAID NO,
BECAUSE OF
COURSE THEY DID.

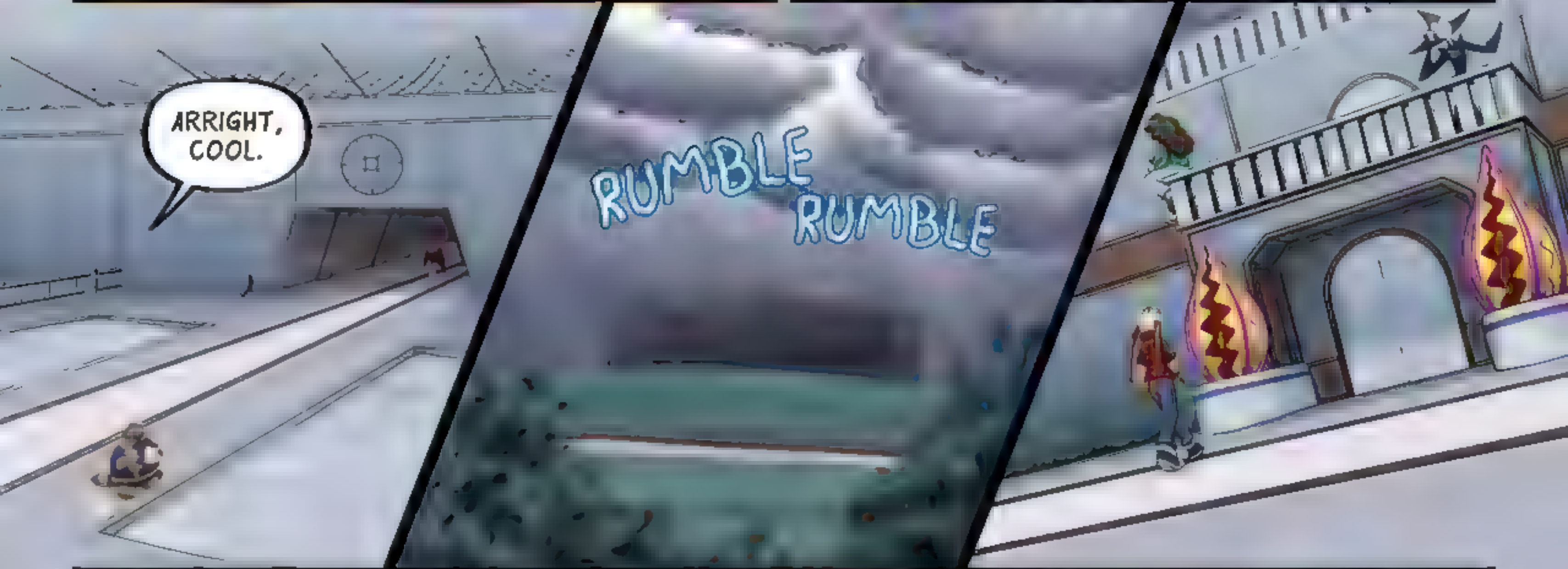
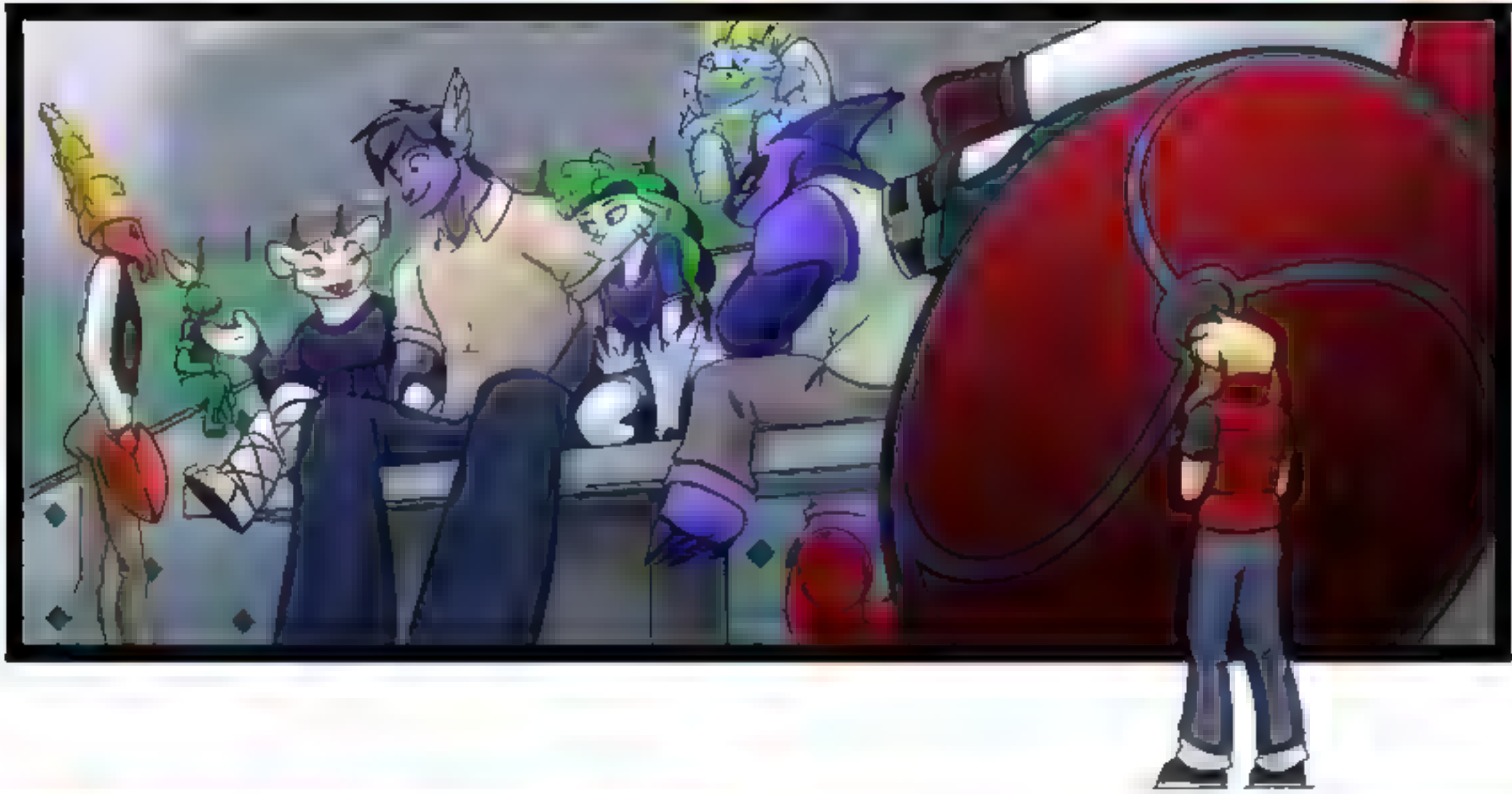


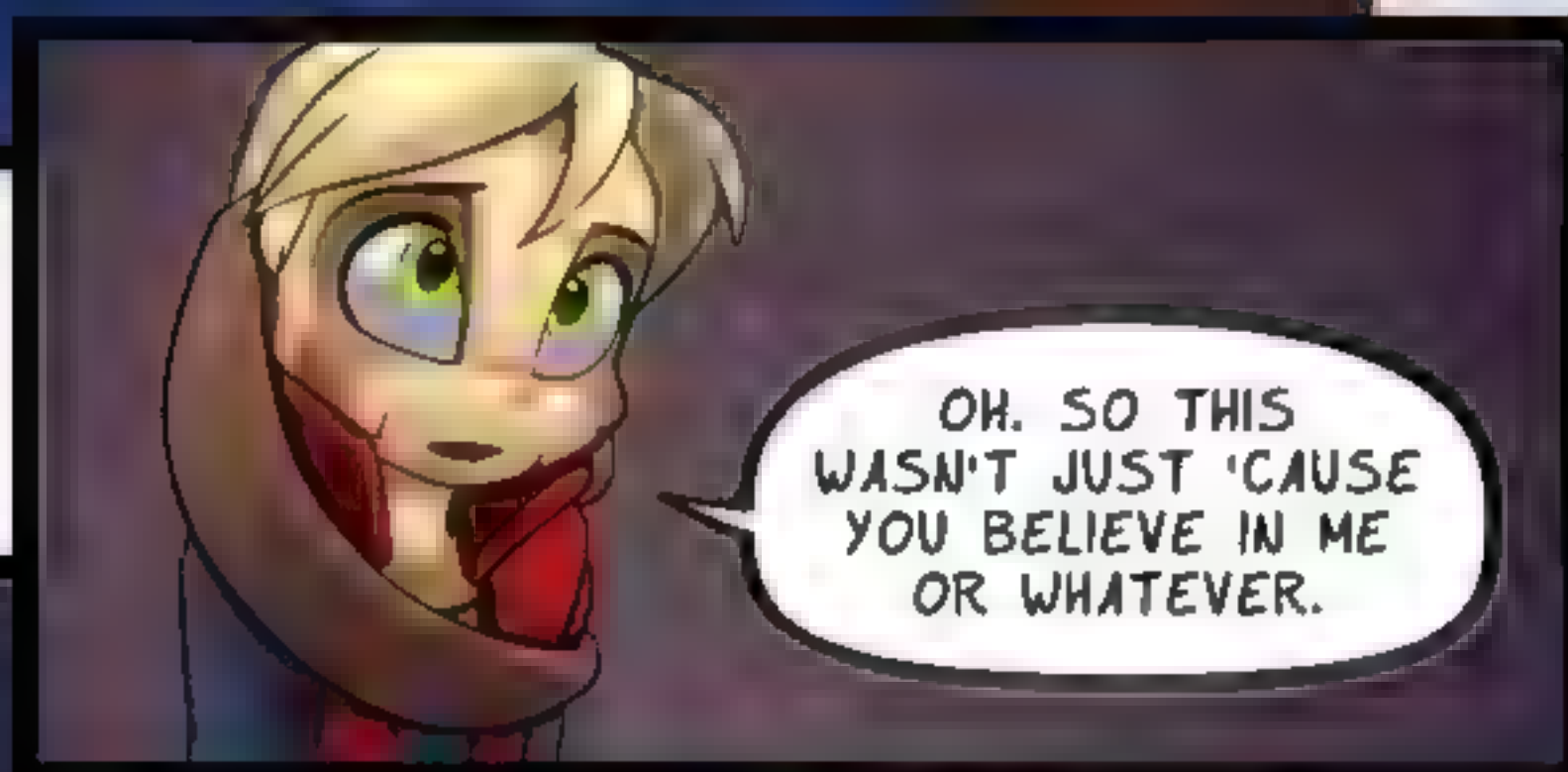
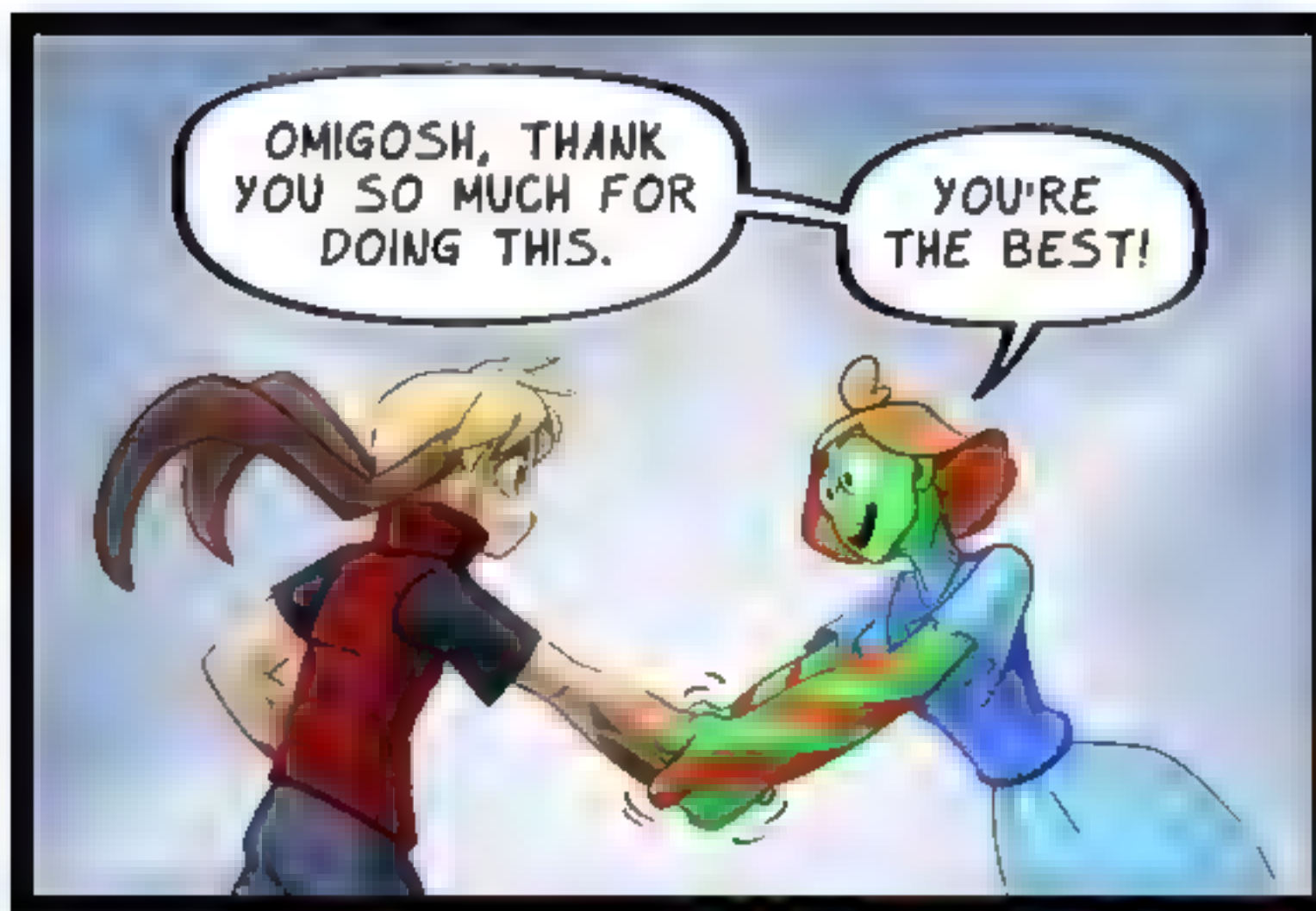
AND THEN YOU MADE A
BIG DEAL OF ALSO SAYING
NO, EVEN THOUGH THEY
SAID YOU COULD JOINT IT
IF YOU WANTED TO.



YOU STRAIGHT-UP
DON'T REMEMBER?









DON'T OVEREXTEND YOURSELVES TO FIND FALLAN. I WILL SEND A MASS ALERT AND HAVE ALL FACULTY AND STAFF KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR HIM.

BUT OUR FIRST DUTY IS TO PROTECT OUR STUDENTS, WHICH MEANS RESOLVING THIS SECURITY THREAT.



WHAT IF OUR HYPOTHESIS IS CORRECT, AND THE PROBLEMS ARE CONNECTED?

THEN WE PRIORITIZE THE EXTERNAL DANGER.

A LONE SABOTEUR CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH FROM WITHIN OUR WALLS.



KNOCK KNOCK

ENTER!



DOCTOR, WE'VE GOT TEST RESULTS.



ALREADY?
HOW?

NEVER MIND
THAT, WHAT'S
THE VERDICT?



THERE ARE A
TON OF UNDIGESTED
LIDANDOR BEAN PARTICLES
IN THE VOMIT AND
STOOL SAMPLES.

FIRST THING
WE SAW UNDER
A MICROSCOPE.



THAT IS...
DISCONCERTING.

IT'S JUST A
BEAN? WHAT AM
I MISSING?

LIDANDOR BEANS
ARE NATIVE TO MY
HOME IN GALARANTES.
BUT EXPORTS OF IT ARE
ILLEGAL. IT SHOULDN'T
BE HERE.

NOT FOOD,
I'M ASSUMING?



NOT REMOTELY.
THEY CONTAIN AN
EXTREMELY TOXIC
CONCENTRATION OF
LECTIN PROTEINS.

ENOUGH THAT
THEY WERE A POPULAR
INGREDIENT IN KASTINIAN
W.M.D. MANUFACTURE FOR
A WHILE. IT'S WHY
THEY'RE BANNED.

...SEVERAL PEOPLE
SHOULD HAVE DIED
BY NOW, IF THEY'RE
THE CULPRIT.



HOW ARE WE
SEEING WIDESPREAD
ILLNESS AND
NO DEATHS?



WELL -- NO
HARD ANSWERS
YET, BUT THERE'S
POSSIBLE EVIDENCE
OF EXTENSIVE
DENATURATION.



SMALL.
WORDS.
PLEASE.



IT MEANS
THEY'VE BEEN
PRE-TREATED
TO DECREASE
THEIR POTENCY.



SO LET ME
GET THIS
STRAIGHT.

THIS FOREIGN
SUBSTANCE --
WHICH SHOULDN'T BE
NEAR FOOD -- WAS
SOMEHOW IN
THE FOOD...

WHICH MEANS
IT WAS A DELIBERATE
ATTEMPT TO POISON MY
STAFF. BUT NOT ENOUGH
TO KILL THEM, JUST...
TO PRETEND TO
BE A FLU?

...

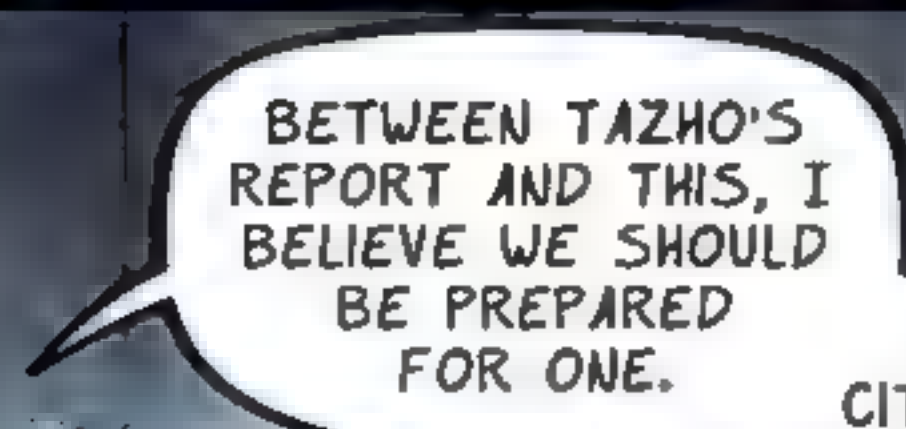
WHY?



BECAUSE DEATHS
WOULD HAVE PROVOKED AN
IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION
AND AN AGGRESSIVE
RESPONSE.



SIR, ARE WE EXPECTING AN ATTACK?



BETWEEN TAZHO'S REPORT AND THIS, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR ONE.

I'LL HAVE CITADEL STAFF BEGIN PREPARATIONS TO EVACUATE THE STUDENTS. READY THE ARGUA SAFE-HOUSE AND BEGIN MOVING PEOPLE.

...QUIETLY.



OUR ENEMY KNOWS WE ARE AWARE OF THEIR PRESENCE AND THAT OUR FORCES ARE IN A WEAKENED STATE.

RAISING ALARM WILL FORCE THEM TO MOVE, AND WE NEED ALL THE TIME WE CAN GET.

GOOD WORK, BOTH OF YOU. DISMISSED.



YES, SIR.

I'M HEADING TO THE KITCHENS TO SEE WHO IS POISONING MY STAFF.

I WILL MEET YOU THERE.



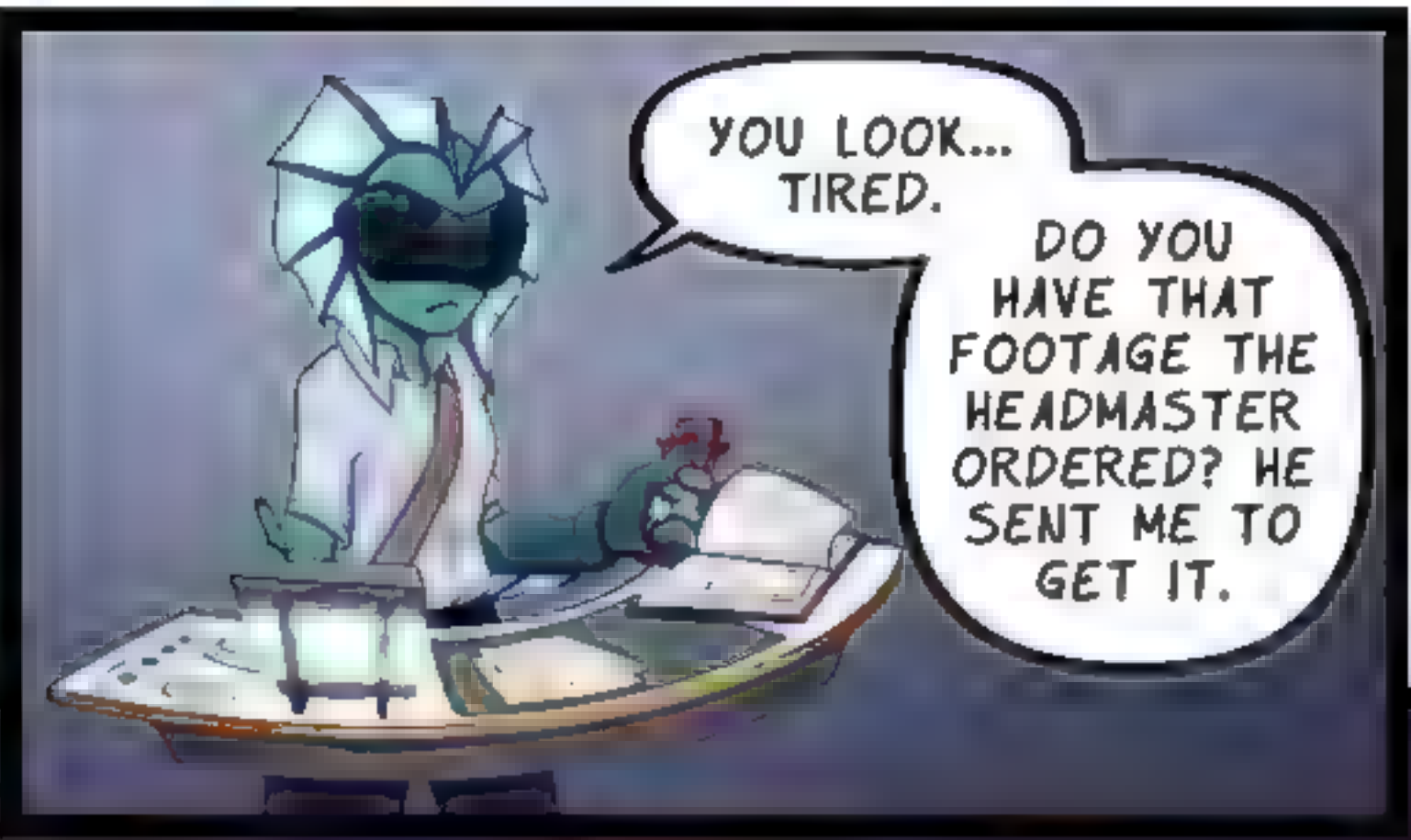
YO?

OH --
HEYA, KID.



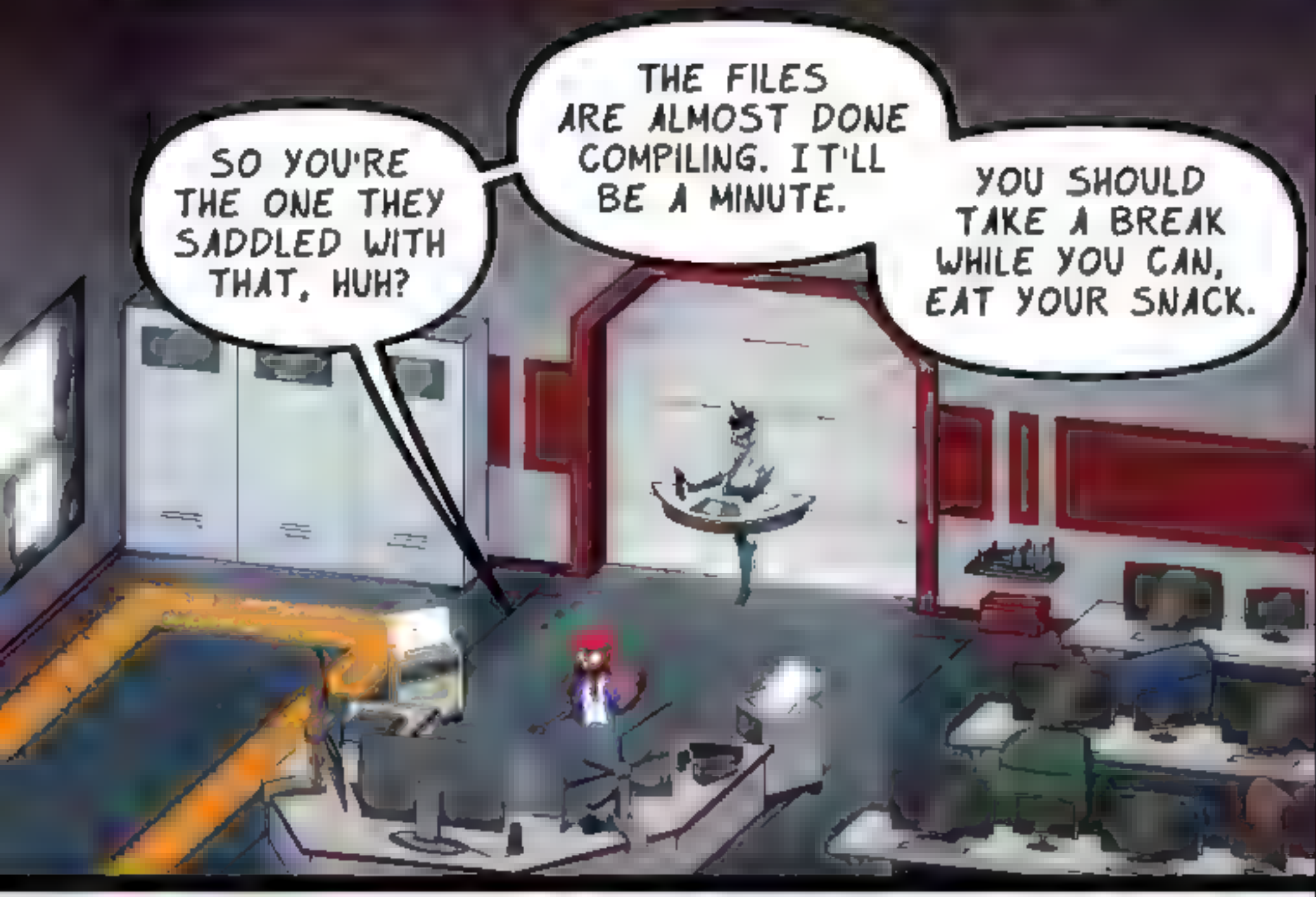
YOU'RE AL,
RIGHT? IT'S
BEEN A FEW
YEARS.

YOU LOOK
TALLER.



YOU LOOK...
TIRED.

DO YOU
HAVE THAT
FOOTAGE THE
HEADMASTER
ORDERED? HE
SENT ME TO
GET IT.



SO YOU'RE
THE ONE THEY
SADDLED WITH
THAT, HUH?

THE FILES
ARE ALMOST DONE
COMPILING. IT'LL
BE A MINUTE.

YOU SHOULD
TAKE A BREAK
WHILE YOU CAN,
EAT YOUR SNACK.



...WHAT
SNACK?



...AH.
POINT
TAKEN.



YEAH, IT
SNEAKS UP
ON YOU.



WHERE IS
EVERYONE?

BUNCH OF FOLKS
CAME DOWN WITH
SOMETHING NASTY, SO
I GOT THE WHOLE
PLACE TO MYSELF
FOR A BIT.

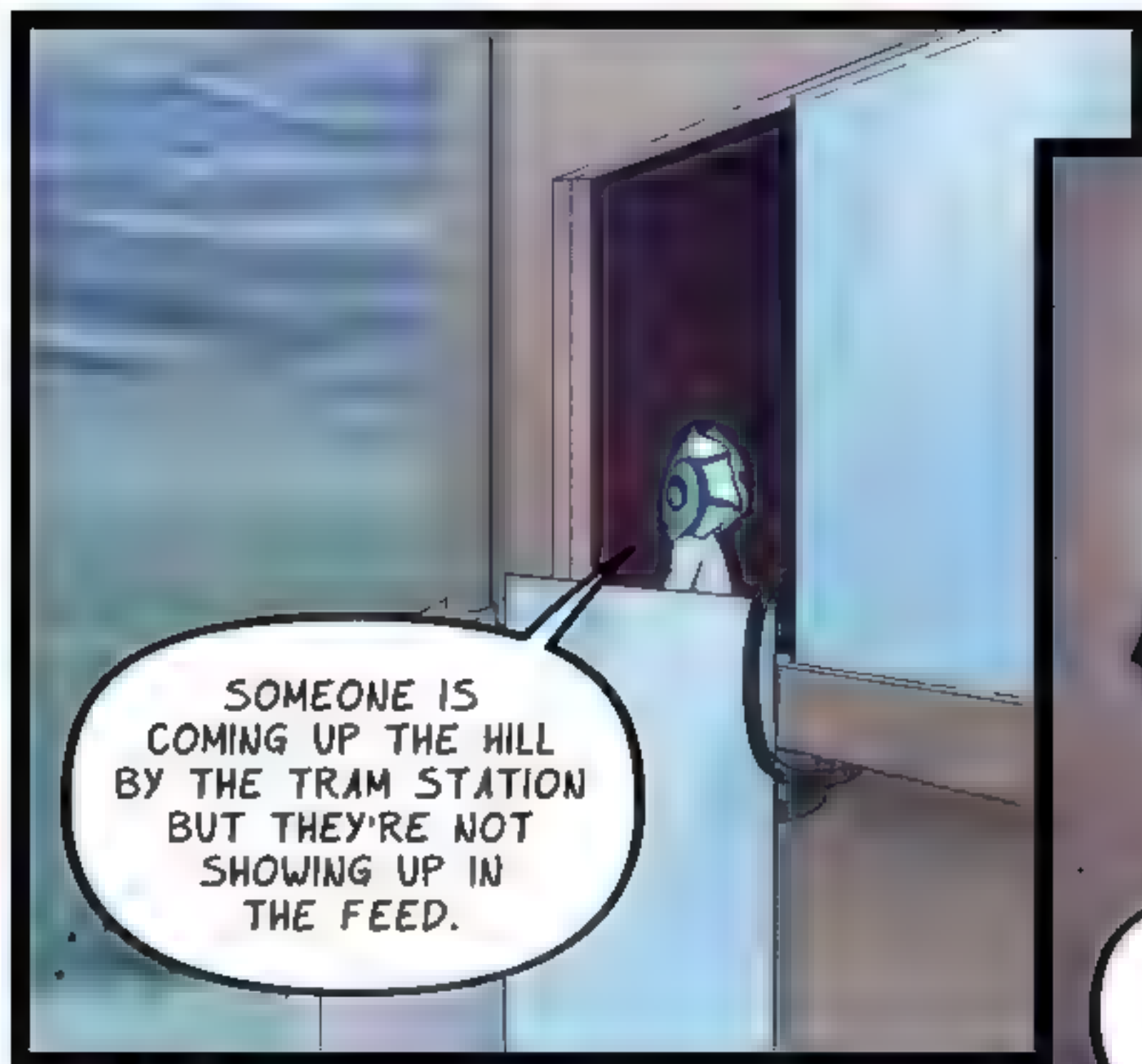


WHICH WOULD
BE AWESOME, IF I
HAD ENOUGH EYES
TO DO ALL THE
WORK MYSELF...



AREN'T YOU
JUST MONITORING
THE SURVEILLANCE
CAMERAS?





ARCH-CURSOR
THOTZEVI! AIN'T IT
A SMALL WORLD.

IMAGINE RUNNING
INTO EACH OTHER
ALL THE WAY
OUT HERE--

--SO FAR BEYOND
RHO-DA-AGNA JURISDICTION,
THAT VIOLENCE OF ANY KIND IS
COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY...





GET BACK
HERE YOU
SQUIRRELY
CLOWN!

YOU'RE NOT
HIDING FROM
ME THIS TIME!



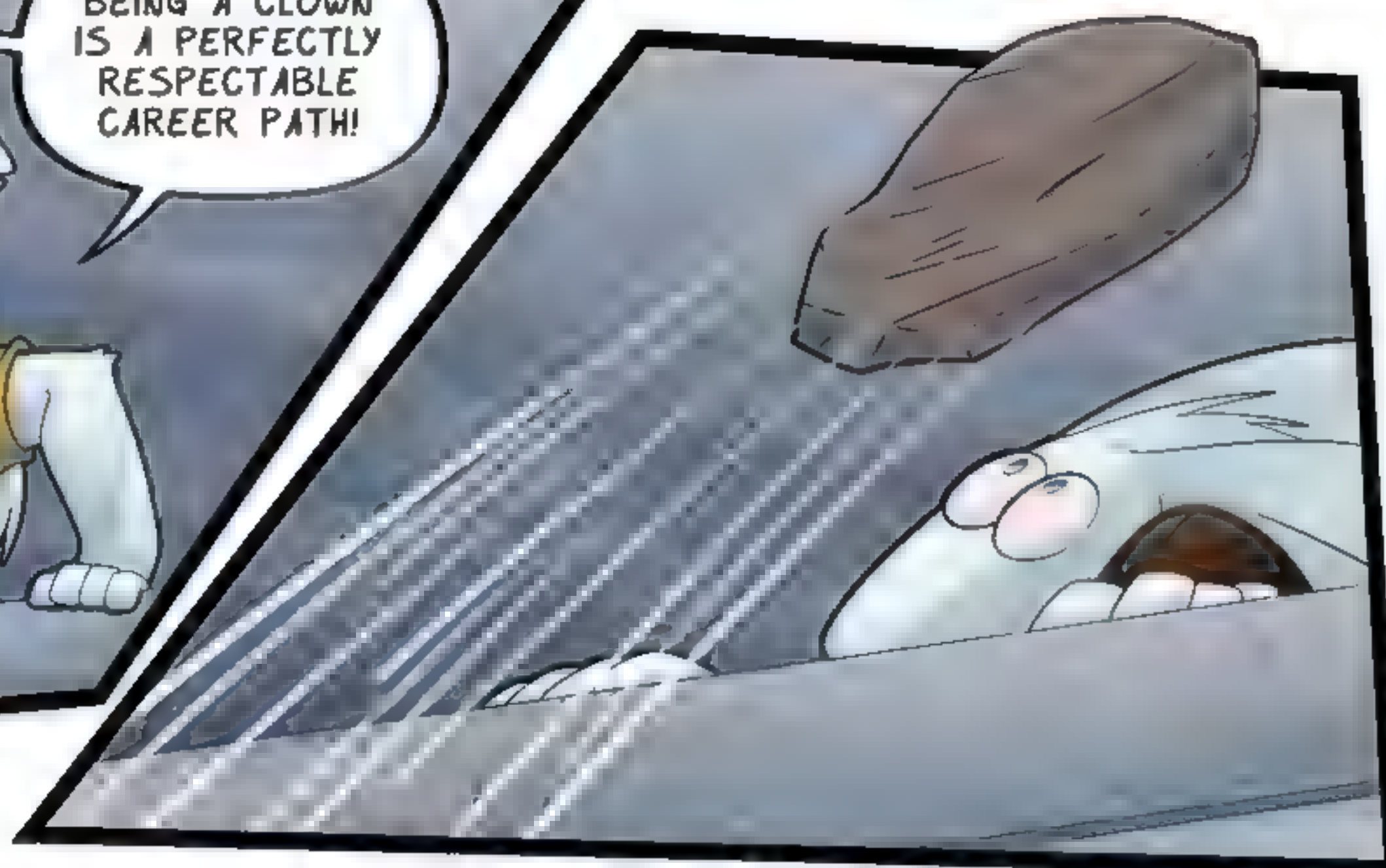
AARGH-- SHE'S
GONNA LEVEL HALF
THE TOWN IF I RUN
AWAY ISN'T SHE.

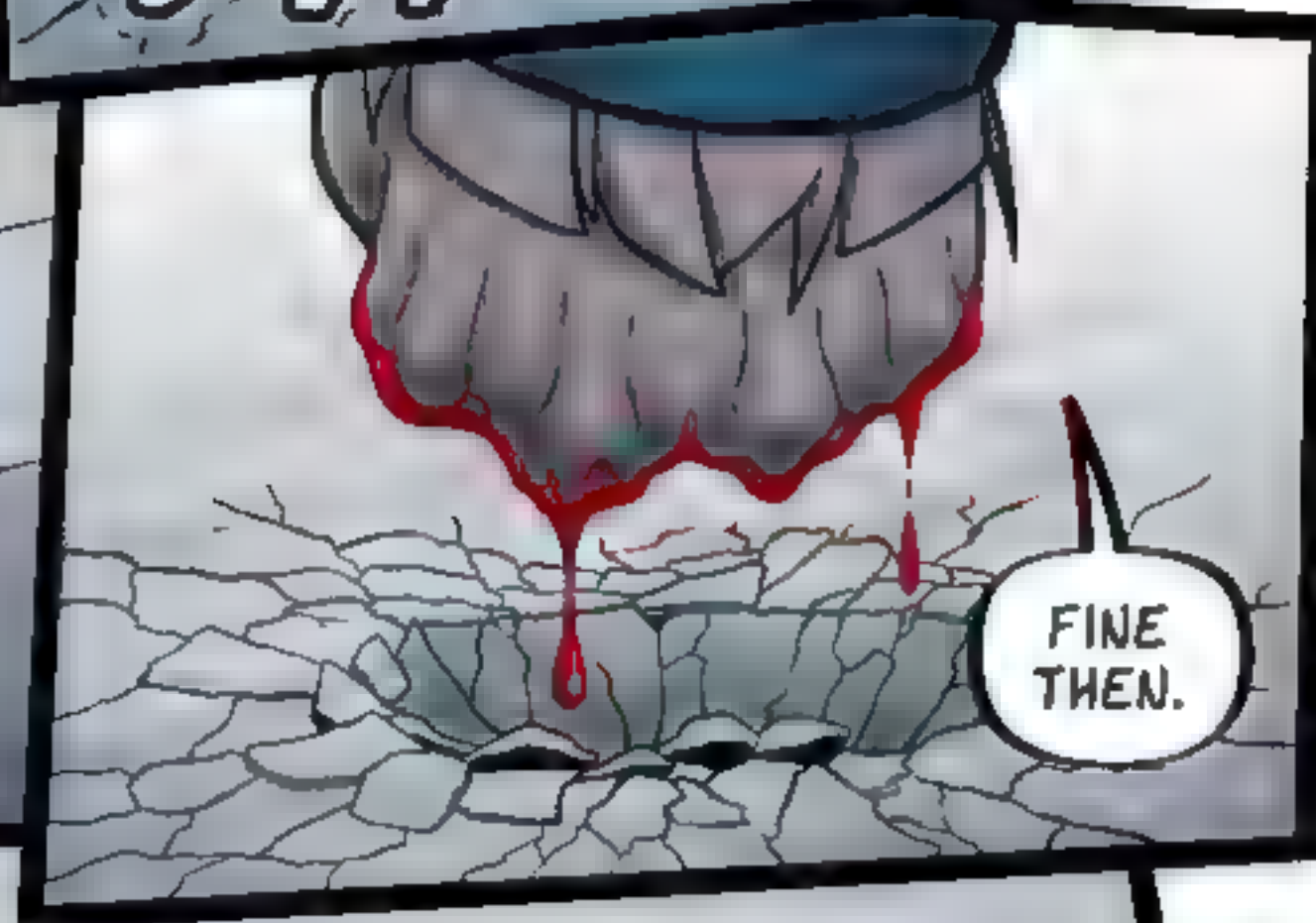


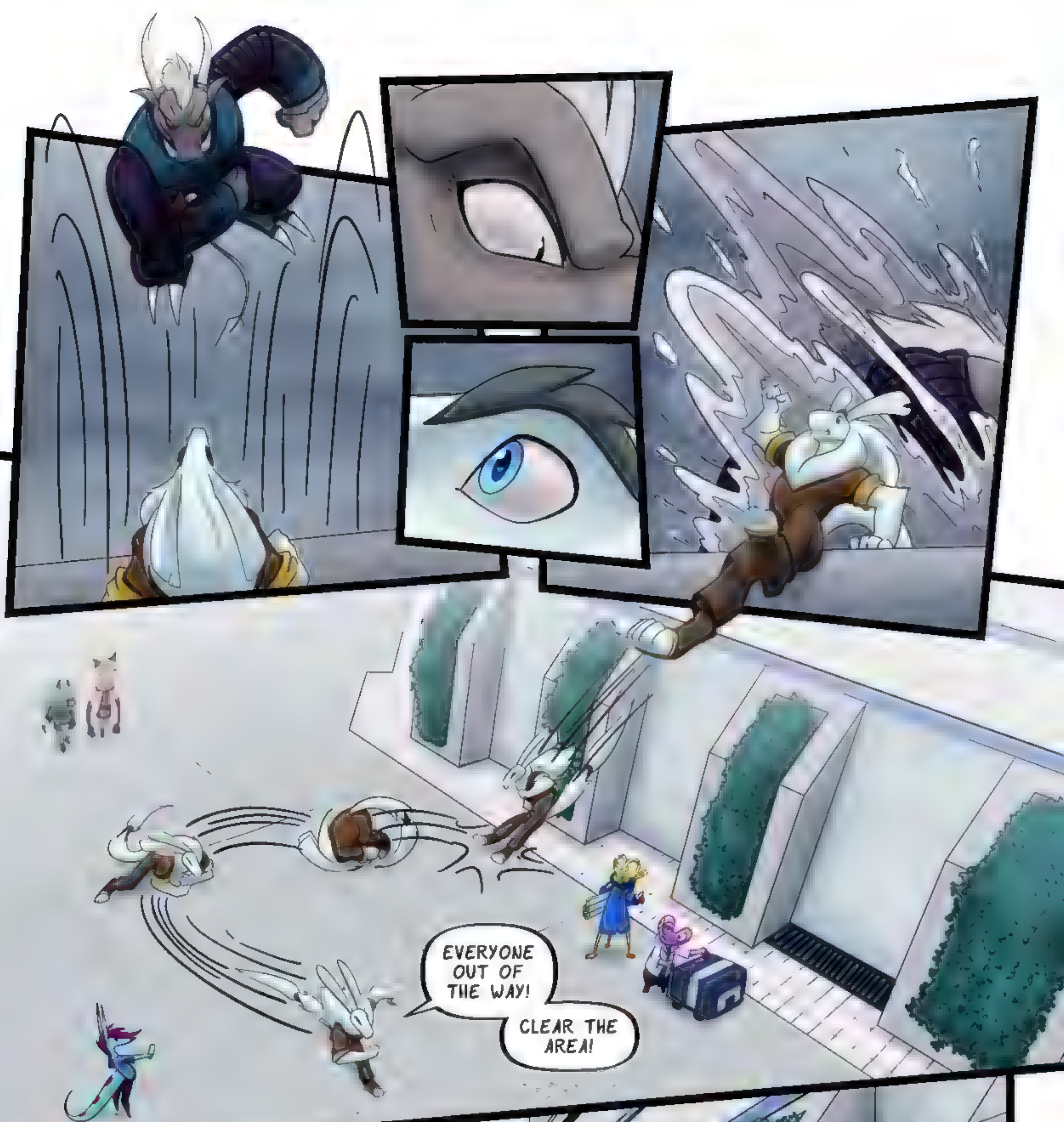
HEY!

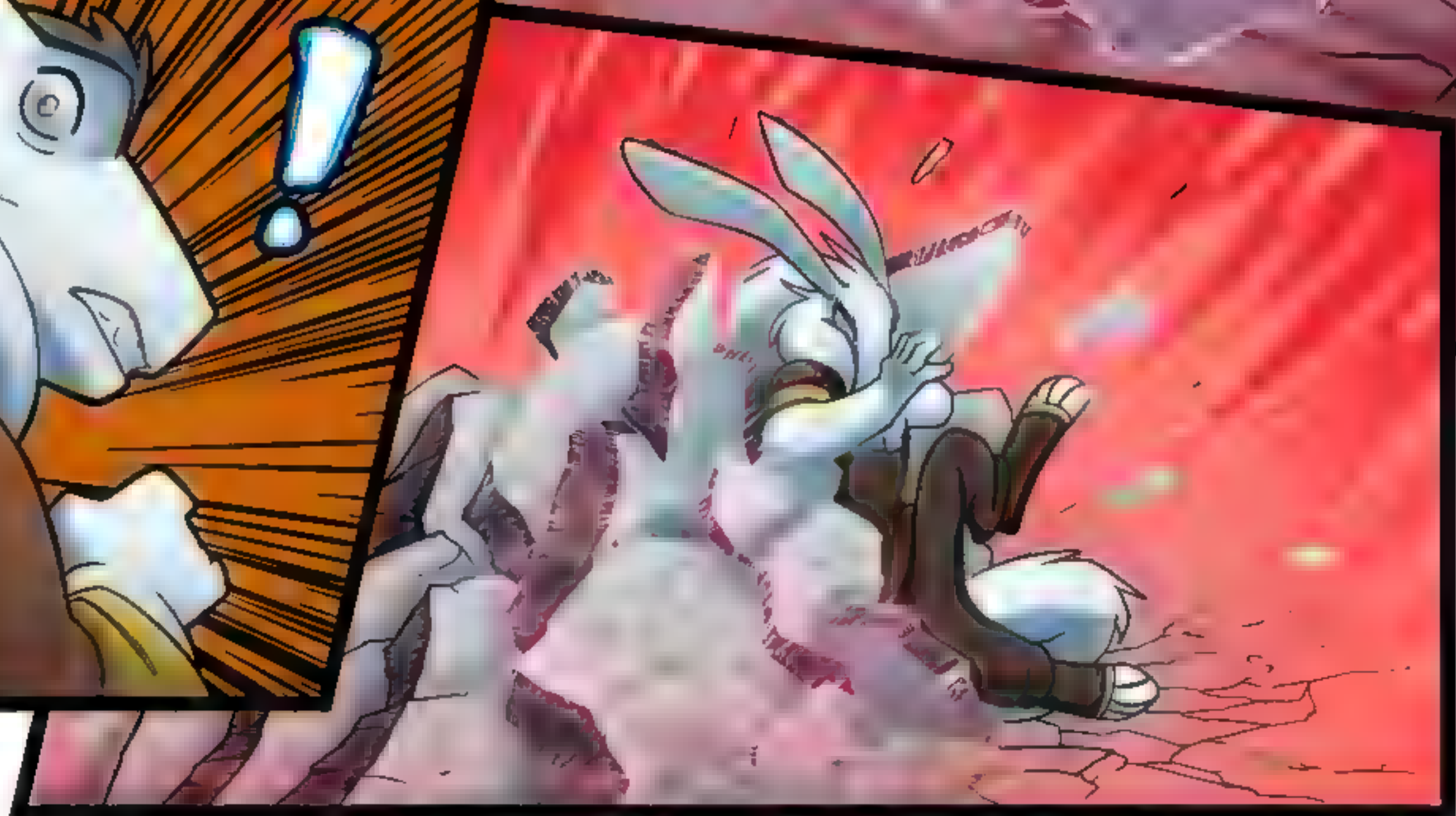
I RESENT
THAT!

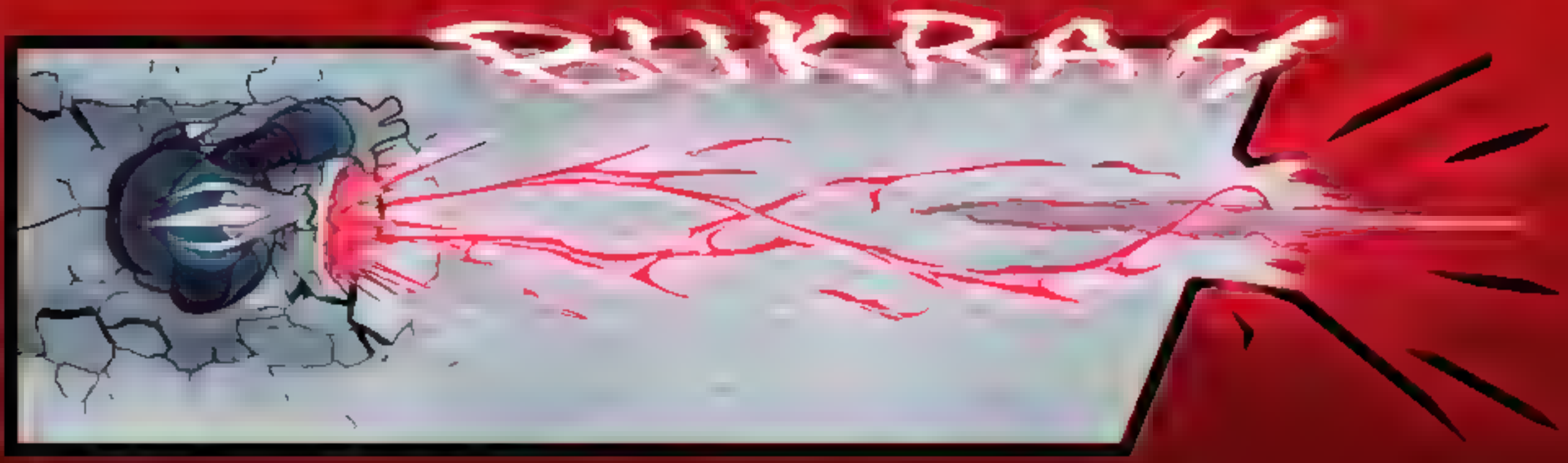
BEING A CLOWN
IS A PERFECTLY
RESPECTABLE
CAREER PATH!



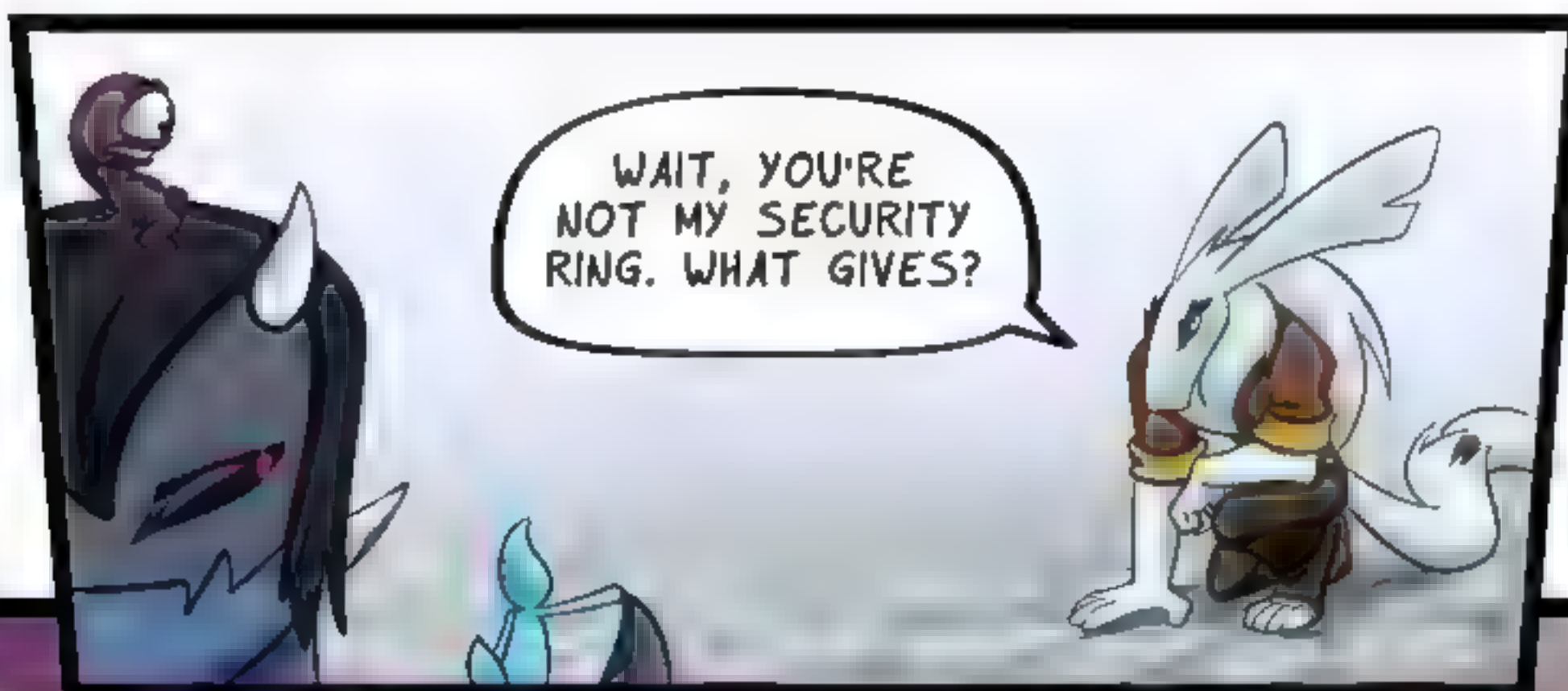












WAIT, YOU'RE NOT MY SECURITY RING. WHAT GIVES?



APOLOGIES. TOWER ONE PUT OUT AN ALERT THAT YOU NEEDED BACKUP.

YOUR USUAL CREW HAD JUST REPORTED BEING SICK EARLIER.

Musical notes



AH, YES, EXCELLENT NEWS! TIMING COULDN'T BE BETTER!

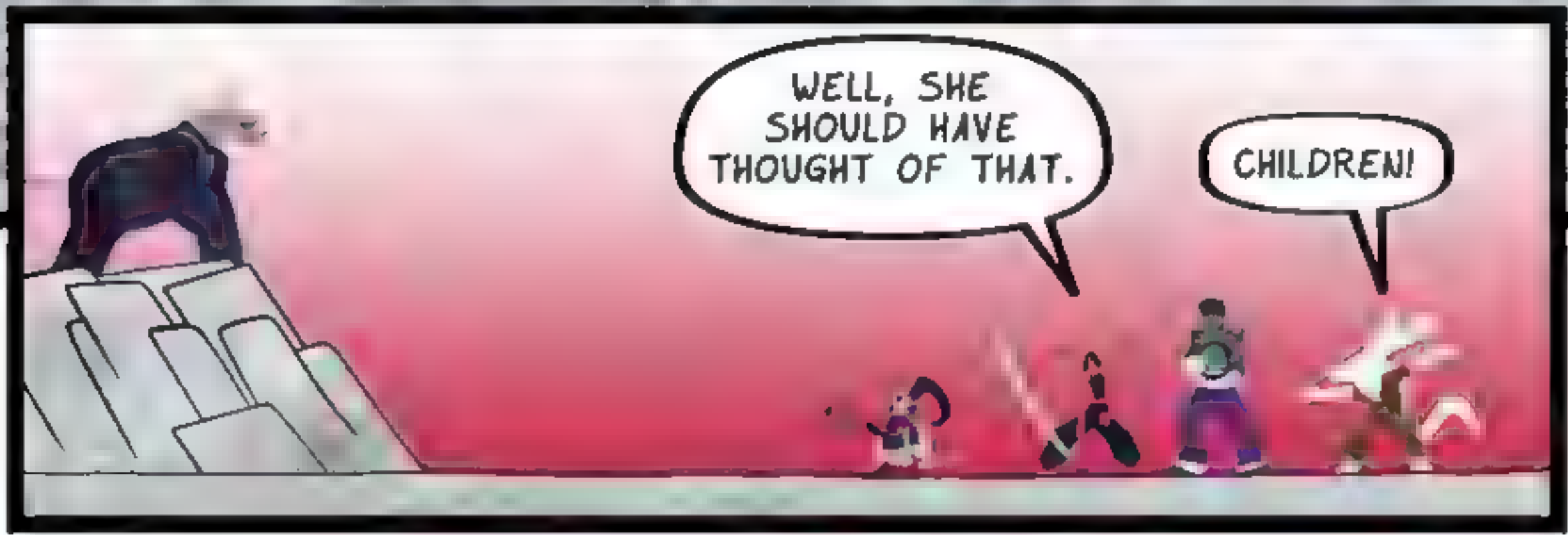
ALRIGHT, KID, JUST GIMME YOUR RING AND SEEK SHELTER. CAN'T LET YOU TRY TO FIGHT HER FOR ME.



DON'T WORRY, CHIEF, WE GOT THIS ONE!

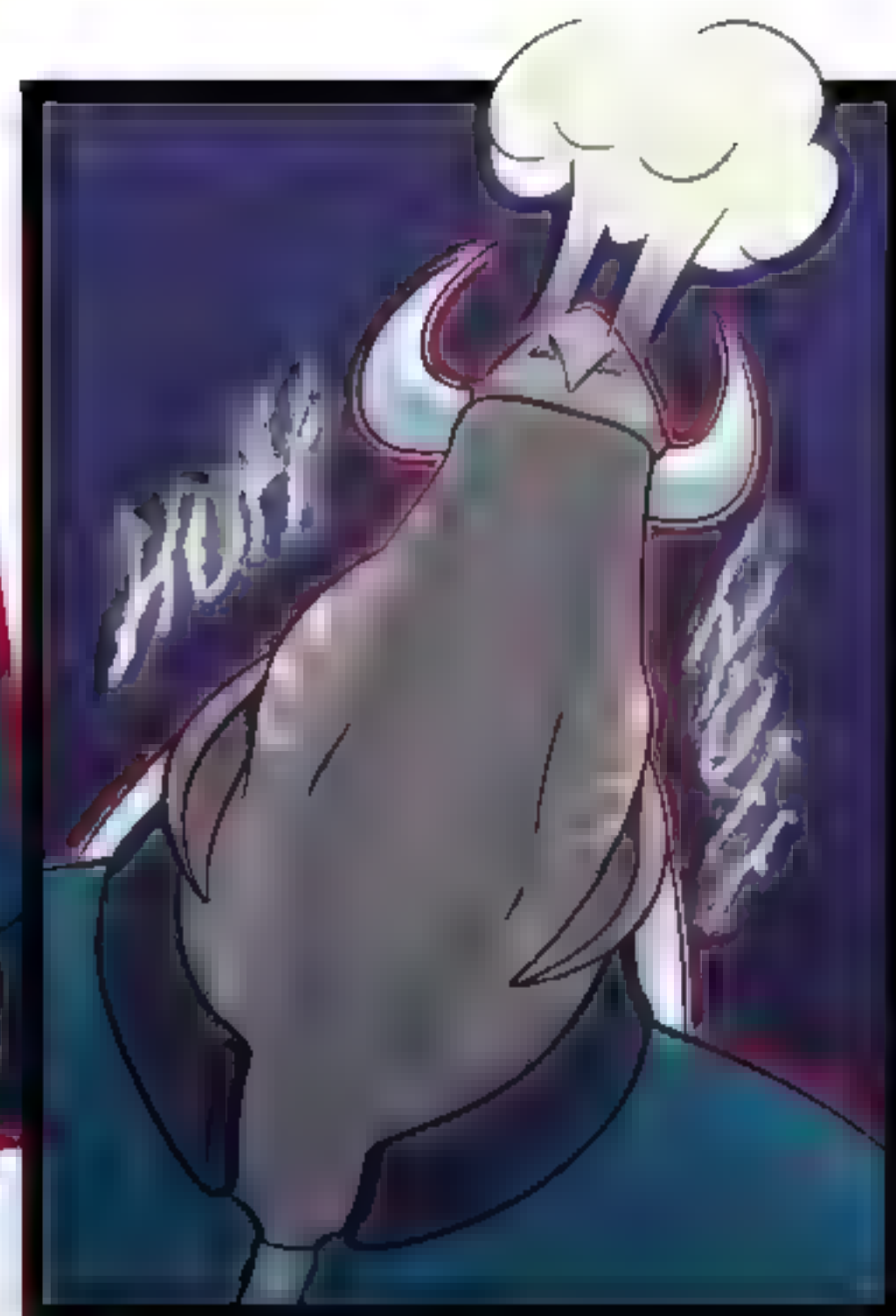
NOT A SNOWFLAKE'S CHANCE IN SUMMER WE'RE LEAVING YOU TO DEAL WITH THIS ON YOUR OWN.

ABSOLUTELY NOT! SHE'S AN ARCH-CURSOR; YOU'RE SILVER LANCERS; YOU ARE NOT READY FOR THIS!



WELL, SHE SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT.

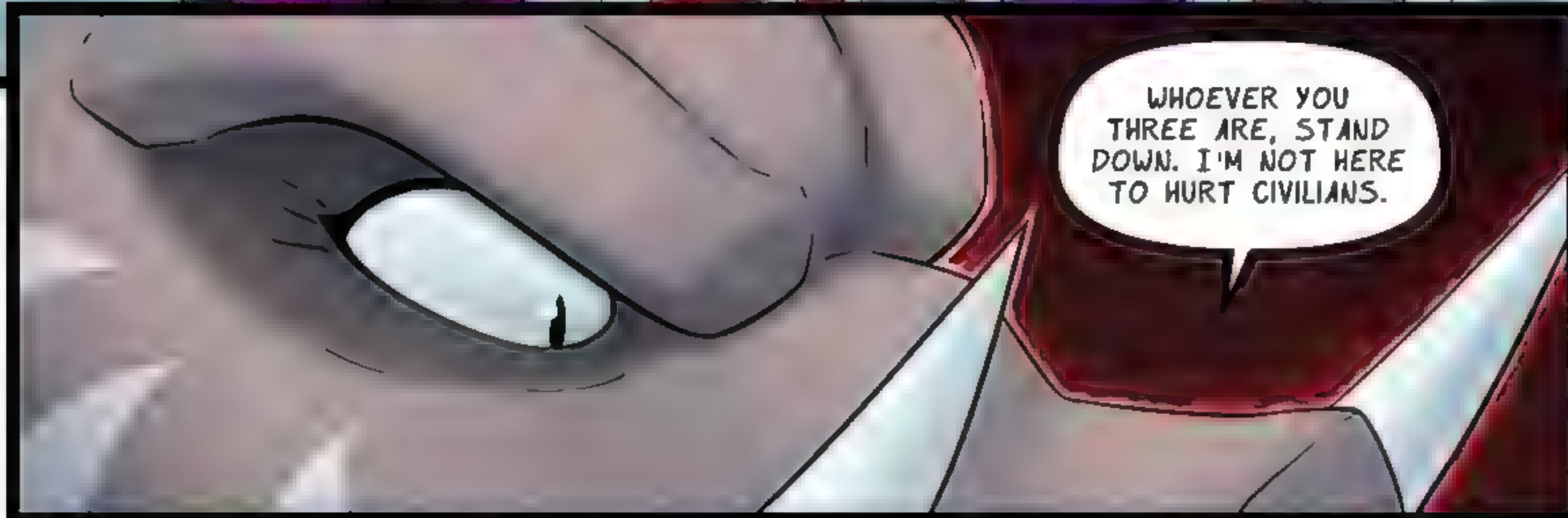
CHILDREN!



WHAT IS SHE DOING?

I THINK SHE'S TYRING TO CALM DOWN.

THOTZEV DOESN'T CALM DOWN. LISTEN TO ME AND GET OUTTA HERE WHILE YOU CAN!



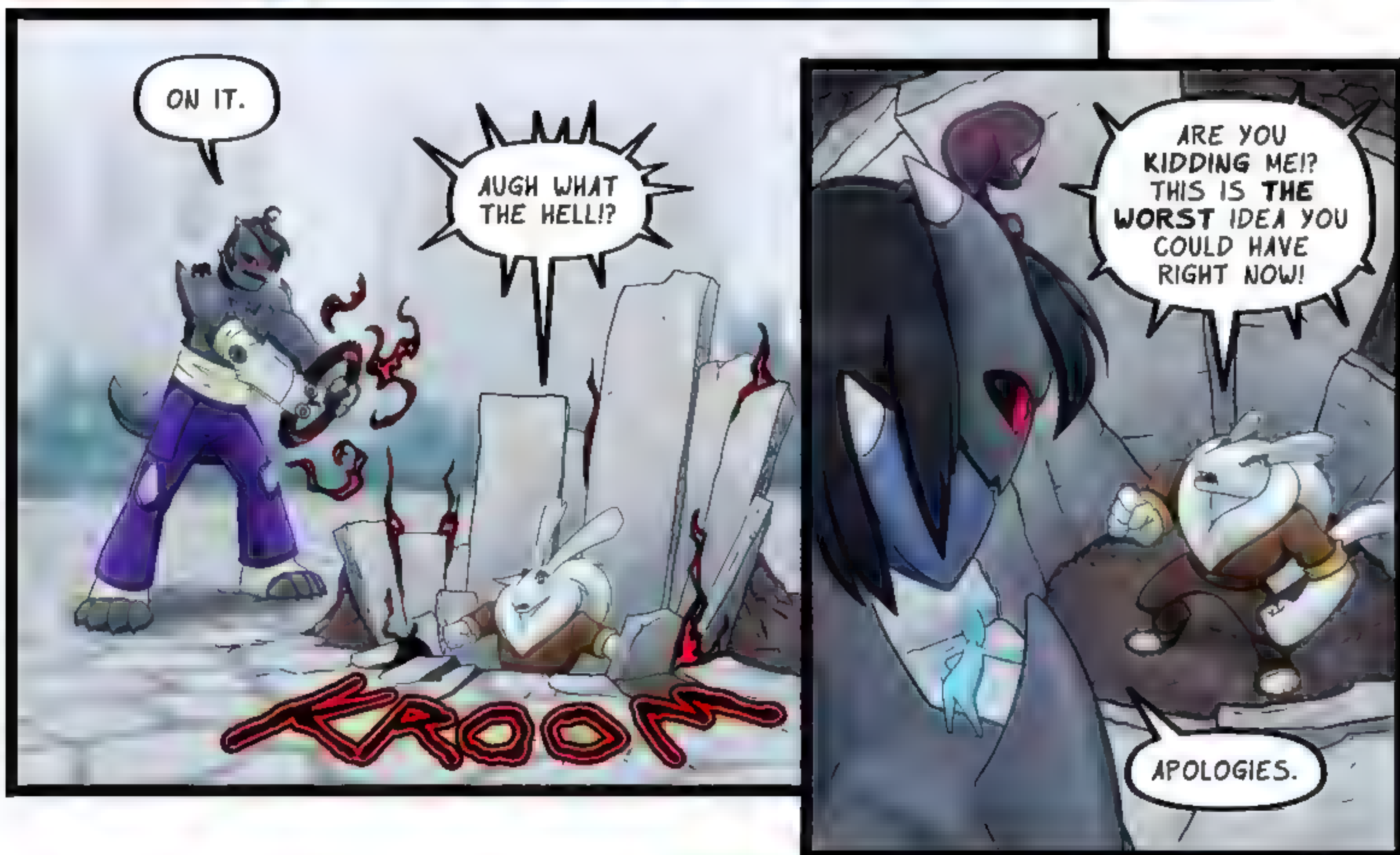
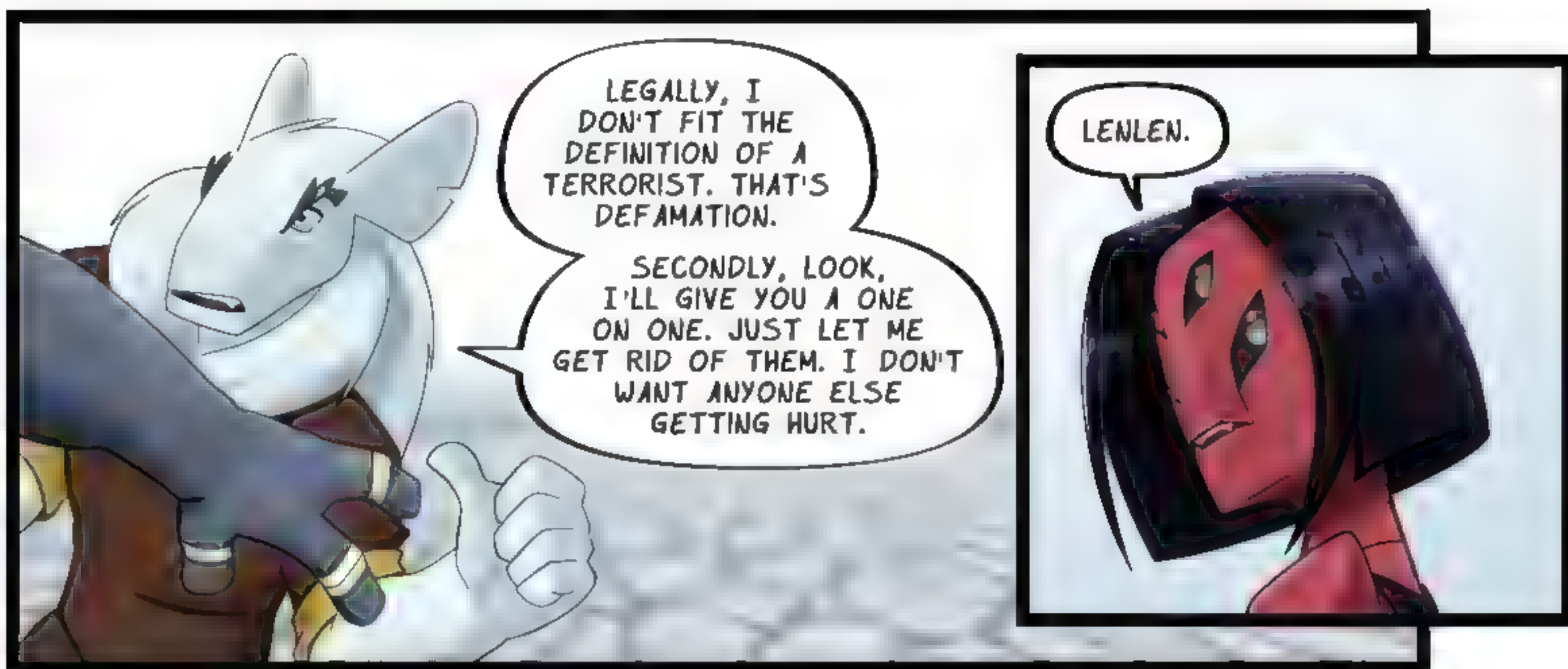
WHOEVER YOU THREE ARE, STAND DOWN. I'M NOT HERE TO HURT CIVILIANS.

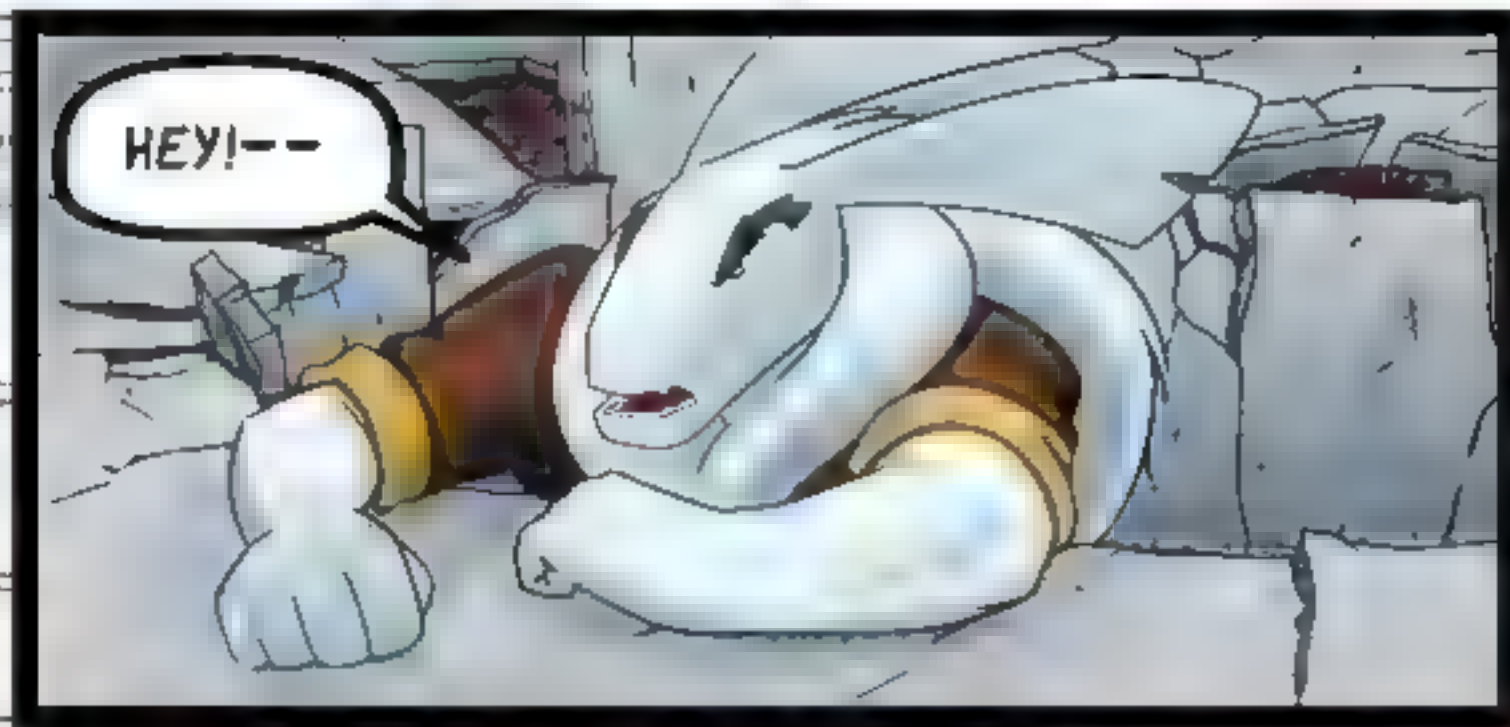
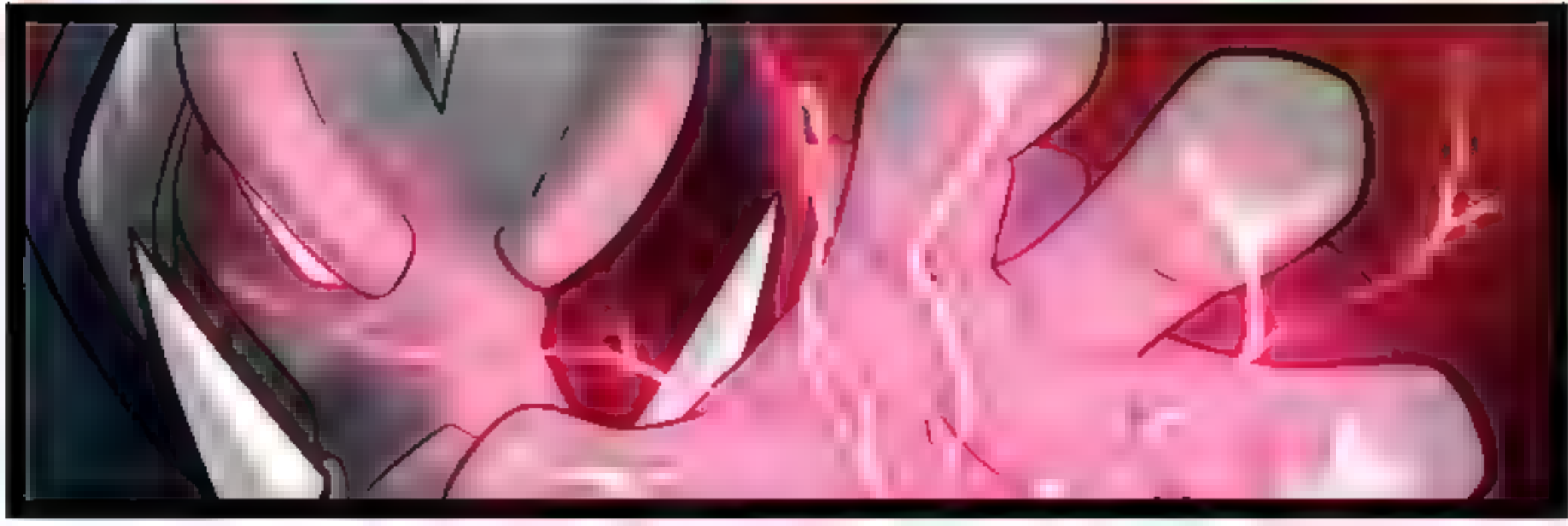


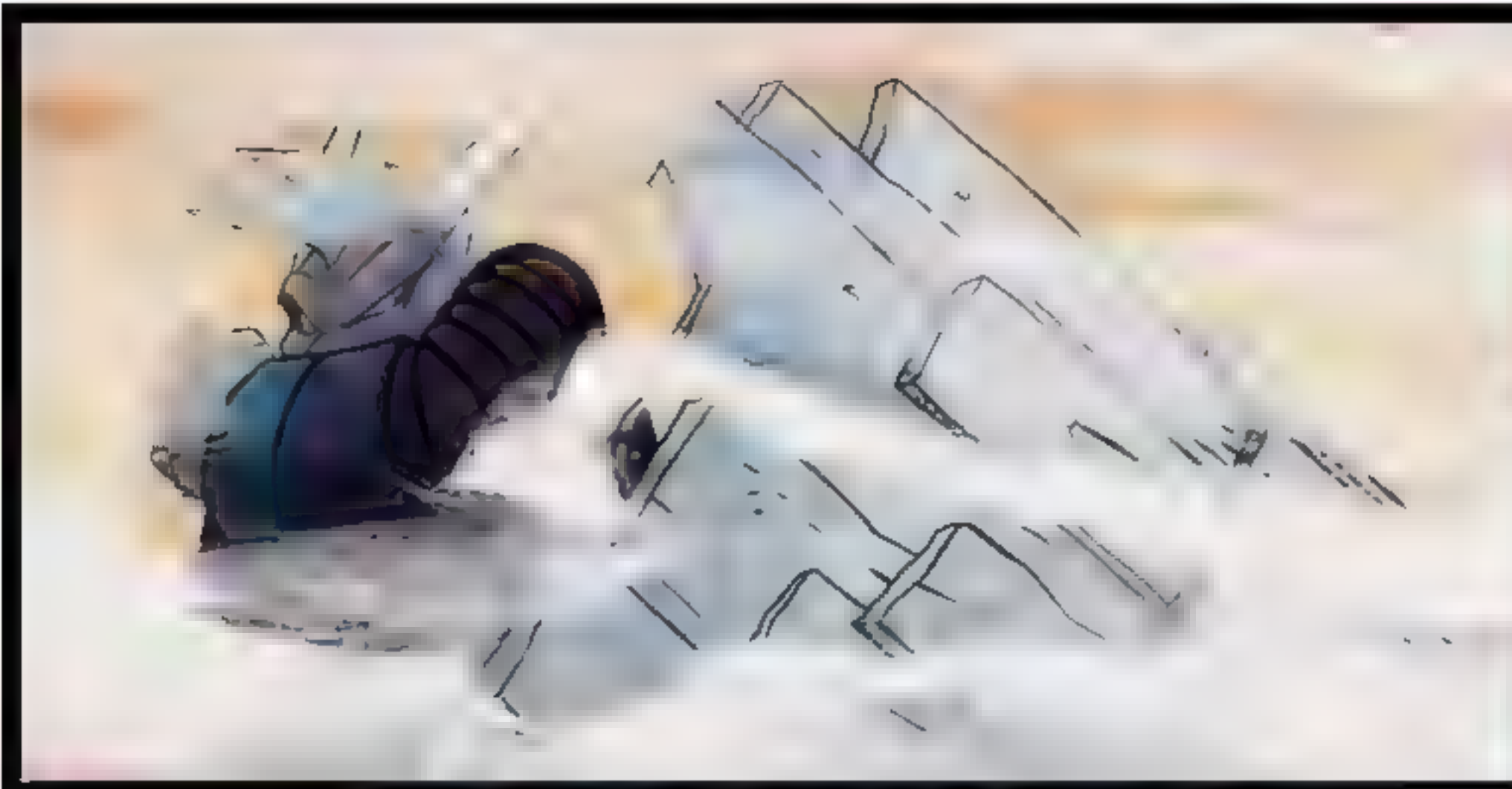
I ONLY WANT THE TERRORIST.

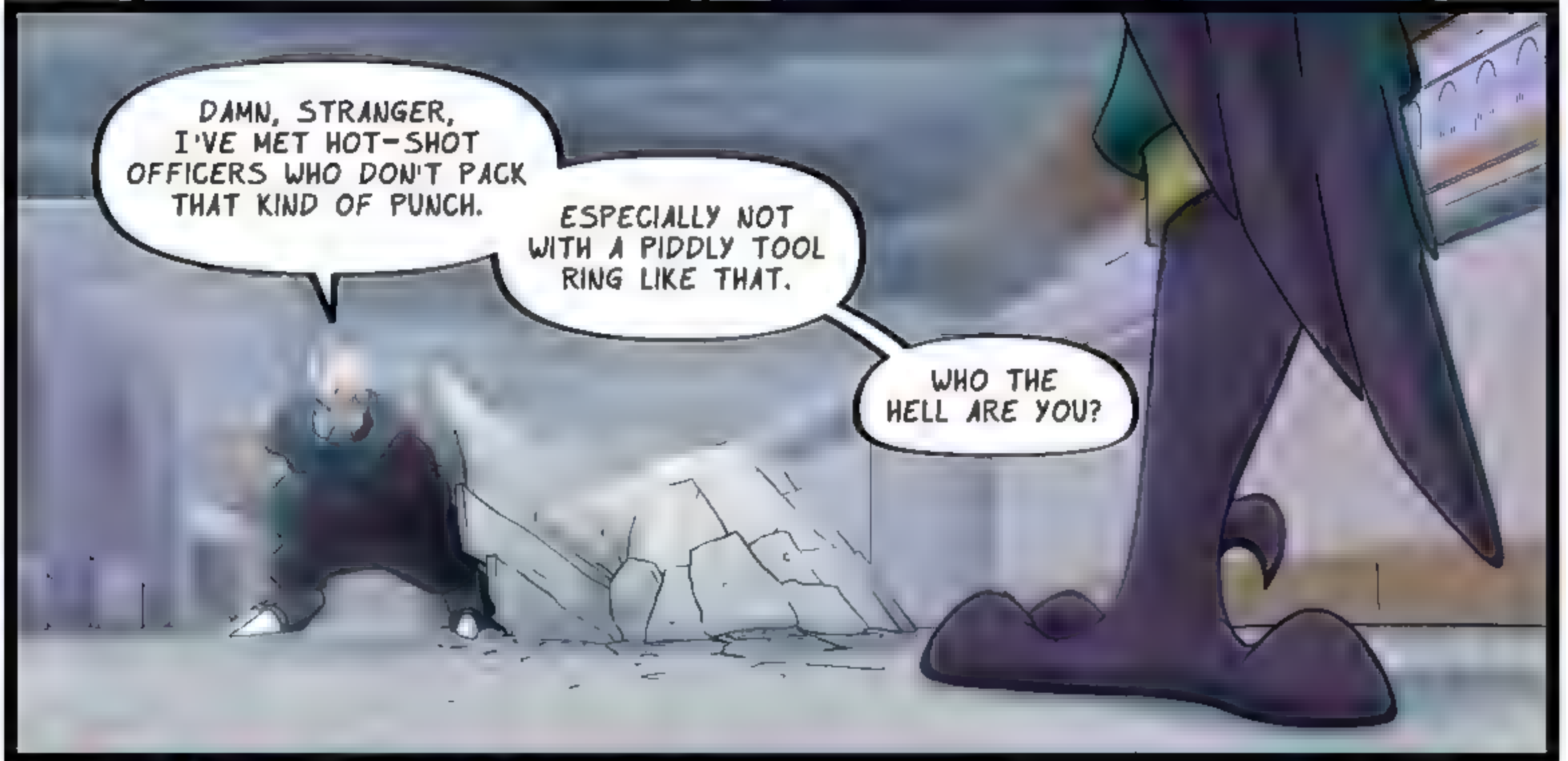
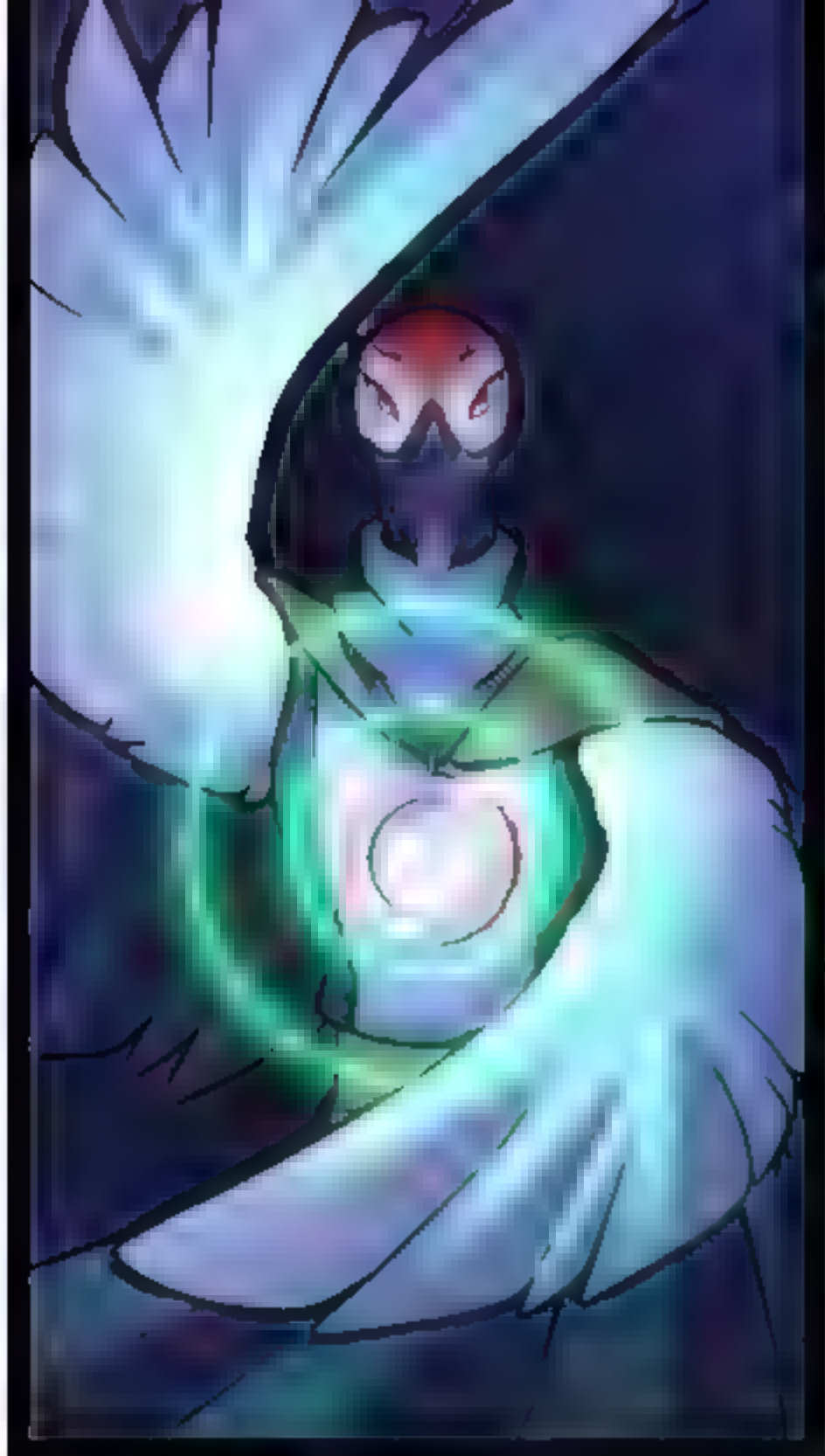
WAY TO PROVE ME WRONG, I GUESS.

AIGHT. FIRST OF ALL...





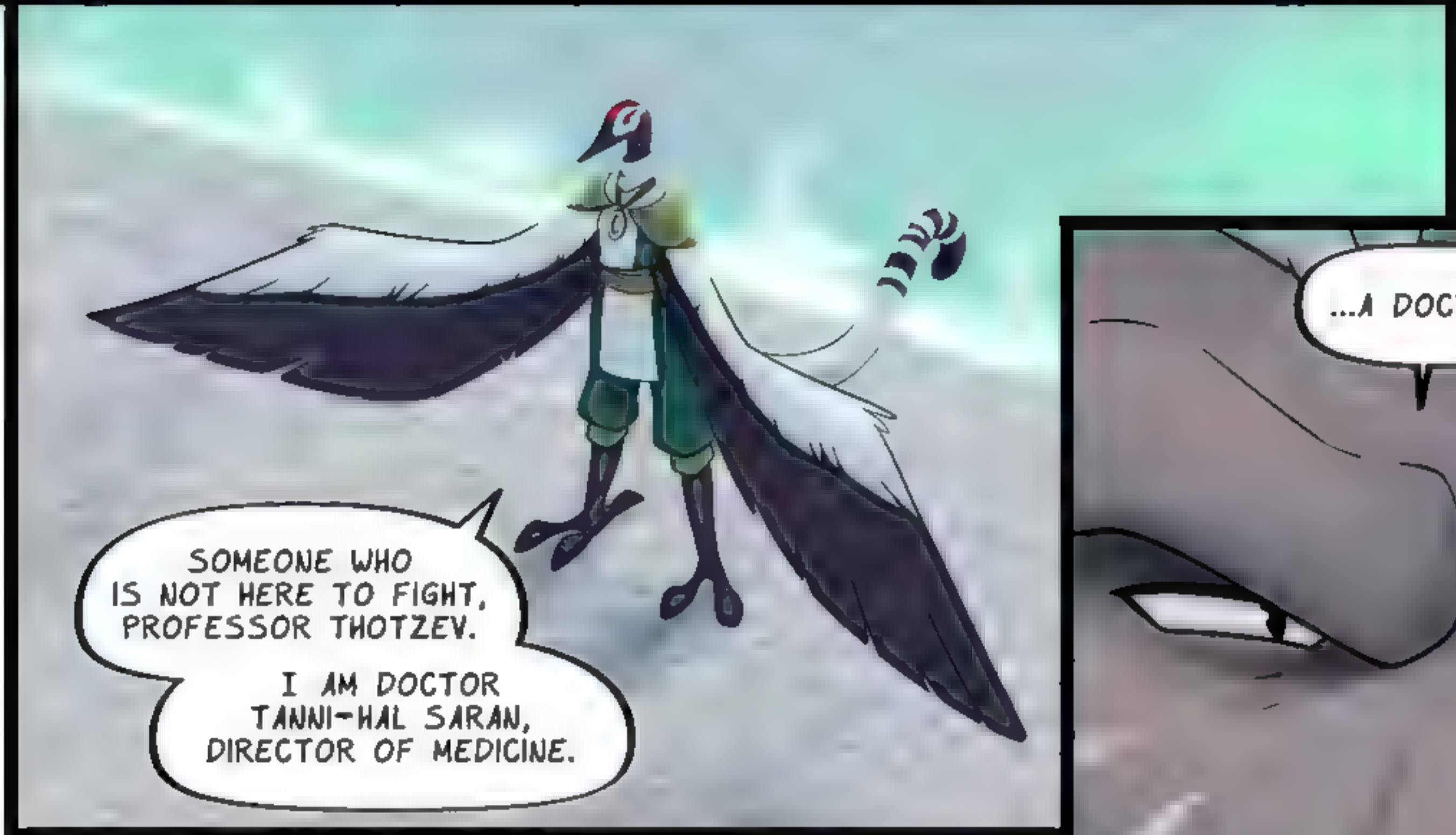




DAMN, STRANGER,
I'VE MET HOT-SHOT
OFFICERS WHO DON'T PACK
THAT KIND OF PUNCH.

ESPECIALLY NOT
WITH A PIDDLY TOOL
RING LIKE THAT.

WHO THE
HELL ARE YOU?



SOMEONE WHO
IS NOT HERE TO FIGHT,
PROFESSOR THOTZEV.

I AM DOCTOR
TANNI-HAL SARAN,
DIRECTOR OF MEDICINE.

...A DOCTOR.





WELL, DOC, I'VE
GOT A TERRORIST
TO BAG.

SO IF YOU
DON'T MIND--

I'M AFRAID
I DO MIND. PLEASE
STAND DOWN.



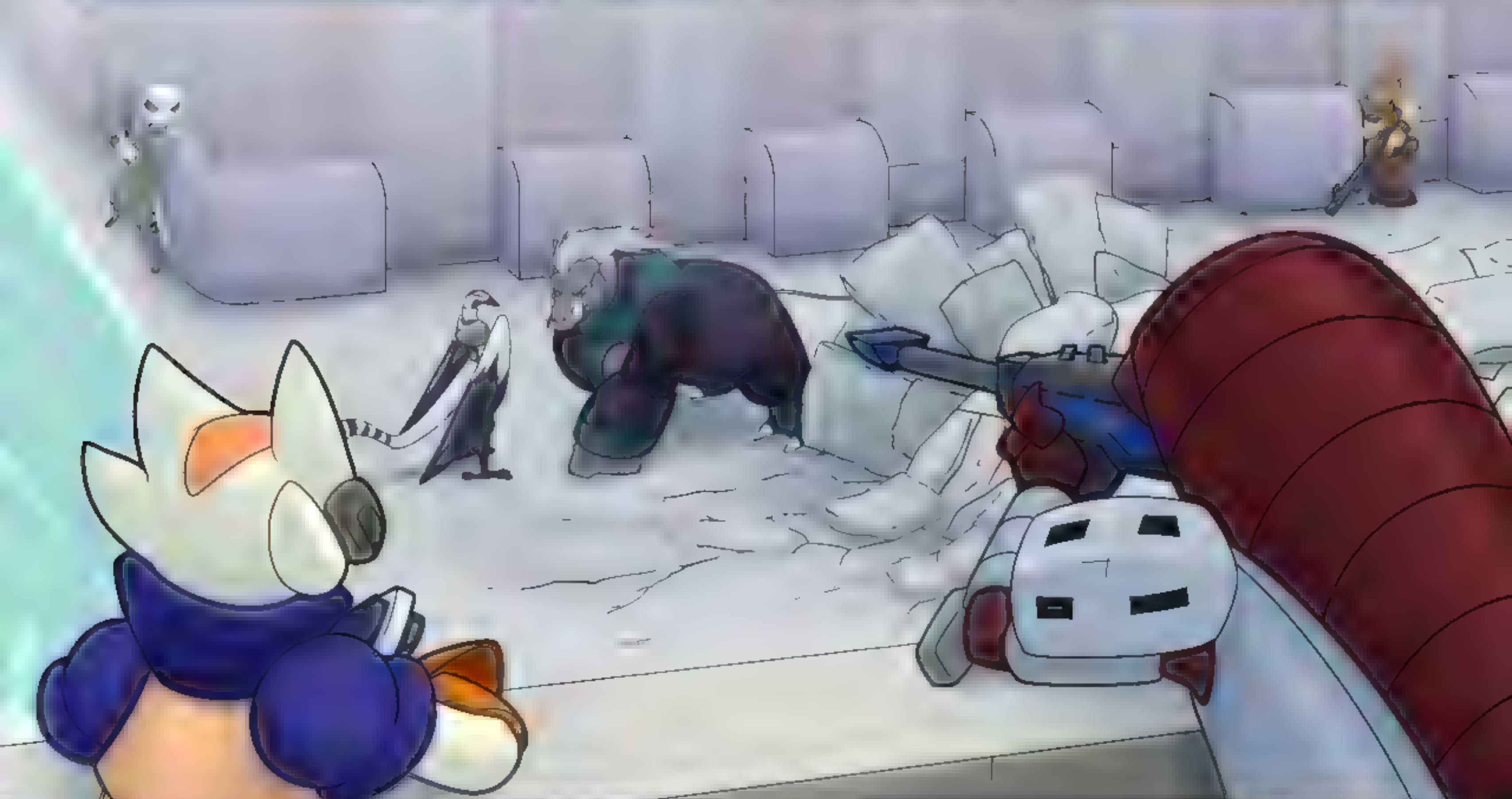
I'M GONNA
PRETEND I DIDN'T
HEAR THAT AND GIVE
YOU ONE LAST CHANCE
TO STEP ASIDE.

YOU GOT SOME
FLASHY TRICKS, BUT
DO YOU HAVE ANY
IDEA WHO YOU'RE
DEALING WITH?



NO. BUT
NEITHER DO YOU.

HAVE YOU
LOOKED AT YOUR
SURROUNDINGS?





DIGGIN' A LOT OF PEOPLE'S GRAVES HERE, DOC.

GIVE ME ONE REASON I SHOULDN'T GLASS THE WHOLE STREET.



I'VE GOT ONE.

DON'T--

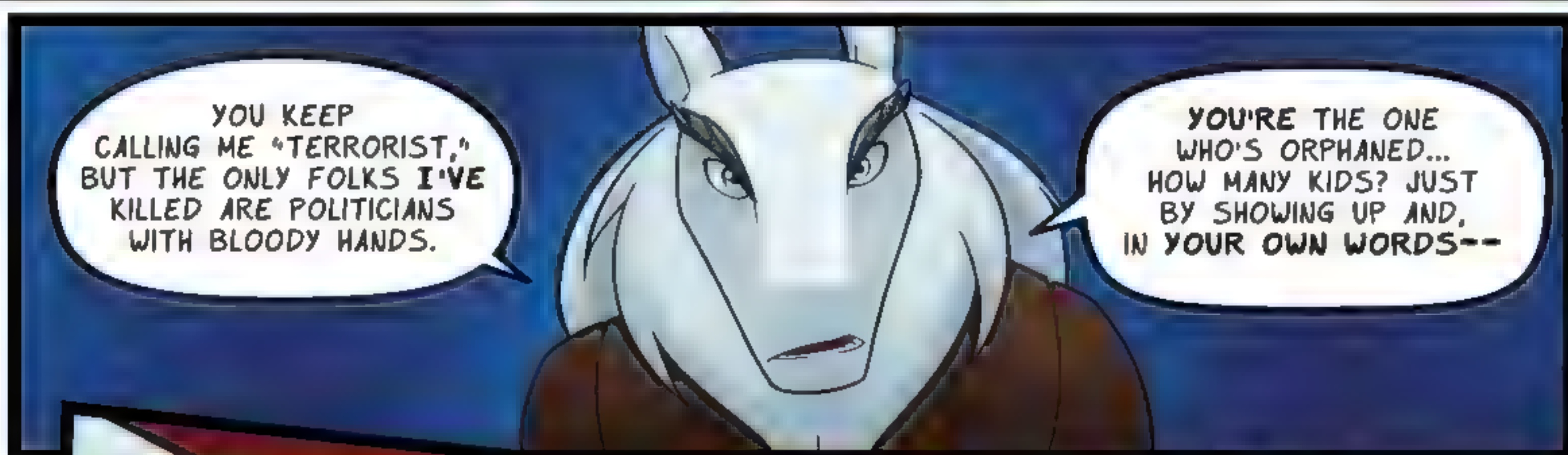


NO, PLEASE, DOC.

LET'S HEAR WHAT THE TERRORIST HAS TO SAY.

GLADLY

RAGTAMET--



YOU KEEP CALLING ME "TERRORIST," BUT THE ONLY FOLKS I'VE KILLED ARE POLITICIANS WITH BLOODY HANDS.

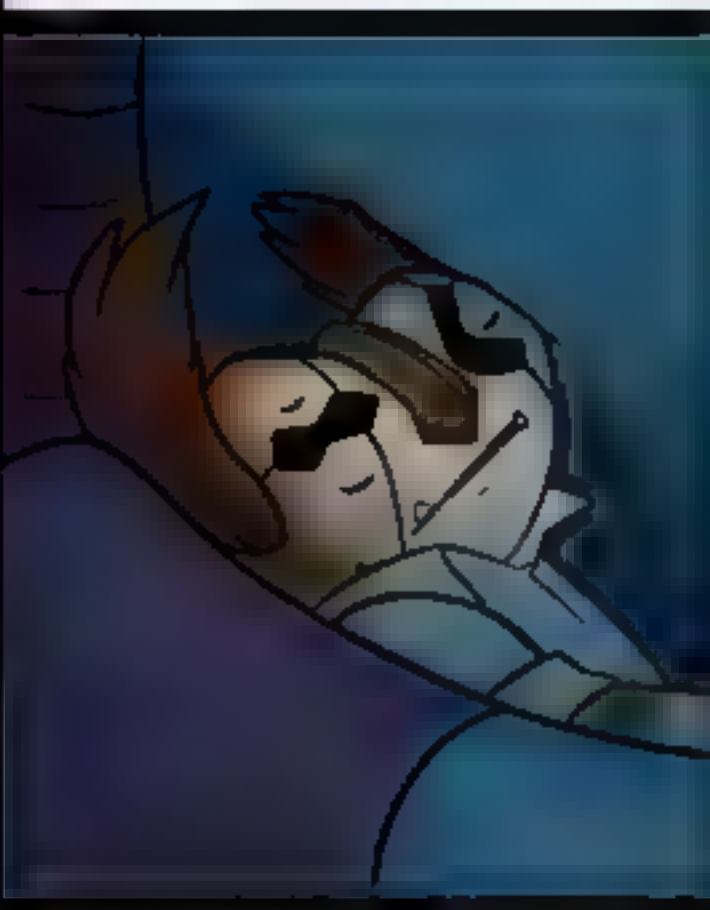
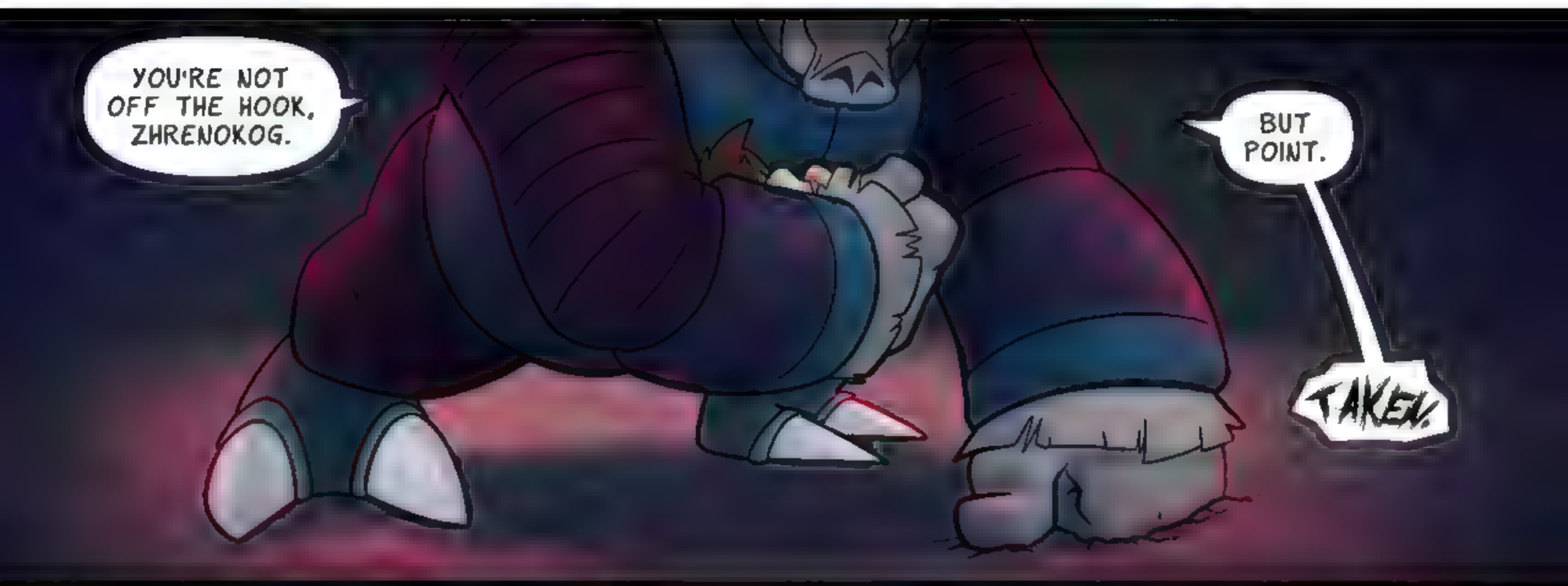
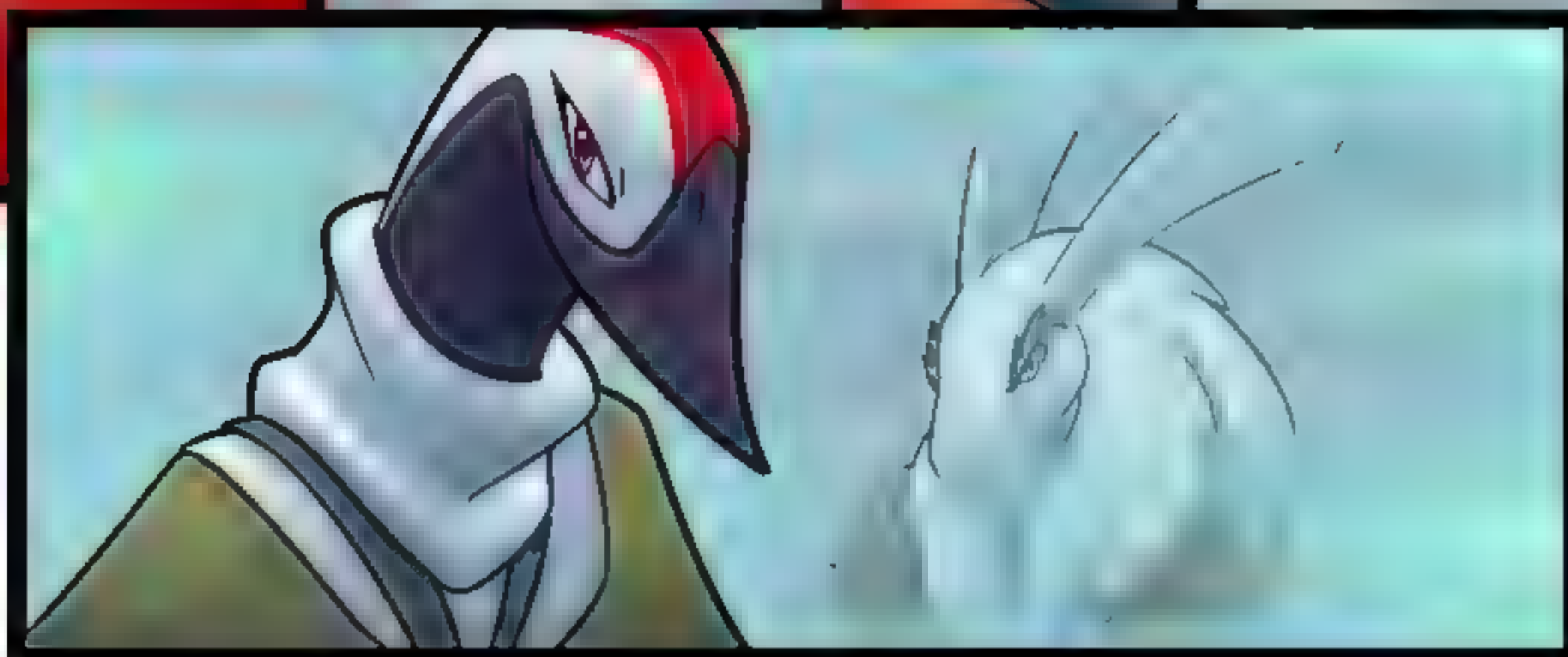
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S ORPHANED... HOW MANY KIDS? JUST BY SHOWING UP AND, IN YOUR OWN WORDS--



"GLASSING THE STREET."



TWITCH





PROFESSOR, WHY ARE YOU HAULING ONE OF OUR COUNSELORS AROUND LIKE THAT?



AH, SHOOT--

UH, THIS ONE... JUST KINDA PASSED OUT IN MY OFFICE. THEY NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION, OKAY? THAT'S THE WHOLE REASON I'M HERE.

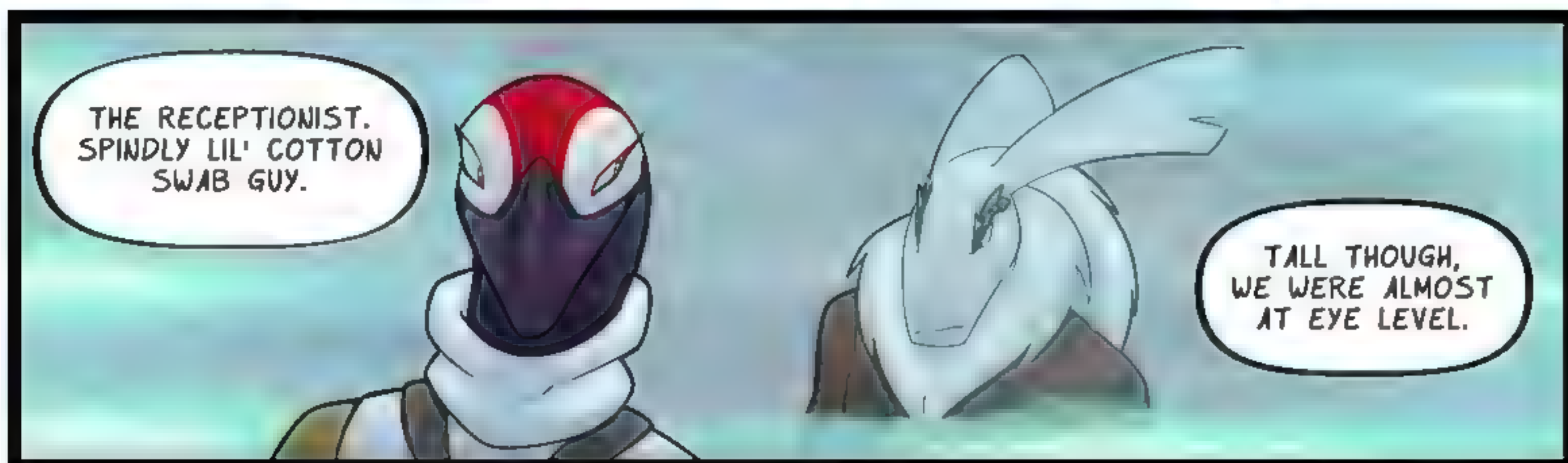
WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE THEM TO THE INFIRMARY BACK AT THE CITADEL?

TRIED TO. THEY SAID IT WAS CLOSED, SO--



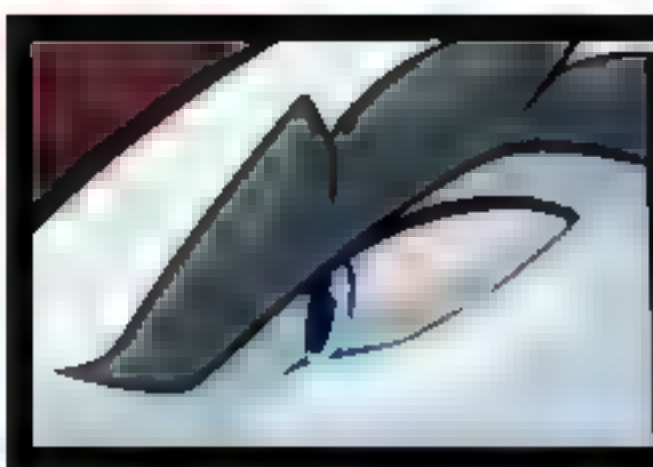
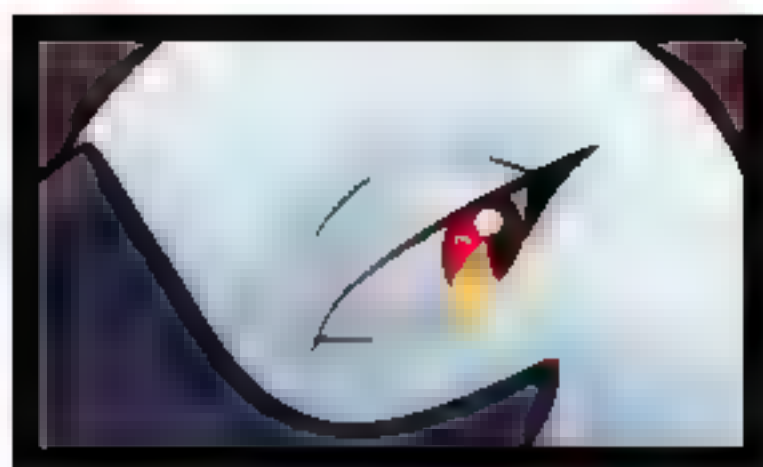
WHAT?

WHO TOLD YOU THAT?



THE RECEPTIONIST. SPINDLY LIL' COTTON SWAB GUY.

TALL THOUGH, WE WERE ALMOST AT EYE LEVEL.



Y'KNOW WHAT?,
I DON'T WANT
TO KNOW.

JUST ANSWER
ME ONE THING. WHY'S
EVERYONE HERE DEFENDING
THIS MAGGOT LIKE HE'S
THE SCHOOL MASCOT?



HEADMASTER
NAZURET WOULD
LIKE TO PERSONALLY
FILL YOU IN ON ALL
THE DETAILS.

TAZHO ZHAZE
WILL BE HERE
SHORTLY TO--



RIGHT HERE,
MA'AM!

AUGH!
WHAT THE--

ZHAZE!



YOU'RE IN
ON THIS!?

OOH, AM
I EVER!



I SURE AM
SORRY ABOUT THIS
WHOLE MESS -- WE
HAD A SAFETY PLAN TO
KEEP YOU TWO
SEPARATED.

IT WOULD
HAVE BEEN LIKE
HE WASN'T
EVEN HERE!



BUUUUUT OUR
SHADOW TEAMS
ARE ON SICK LEAVE.

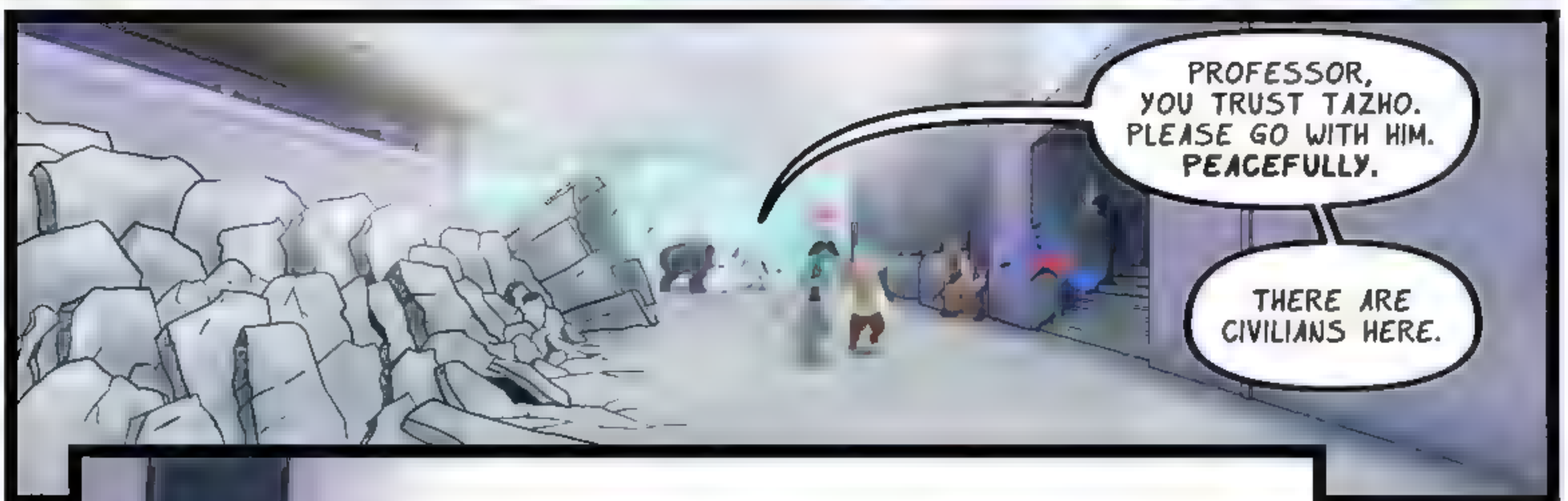
ALL OF
THEM. AT THE
SAME TIME!

...AND ALL OUR
BACKUP PLANS
NEEDED ABLE-
BODIED STAFF
TO EXECUTE
THEM, SO...



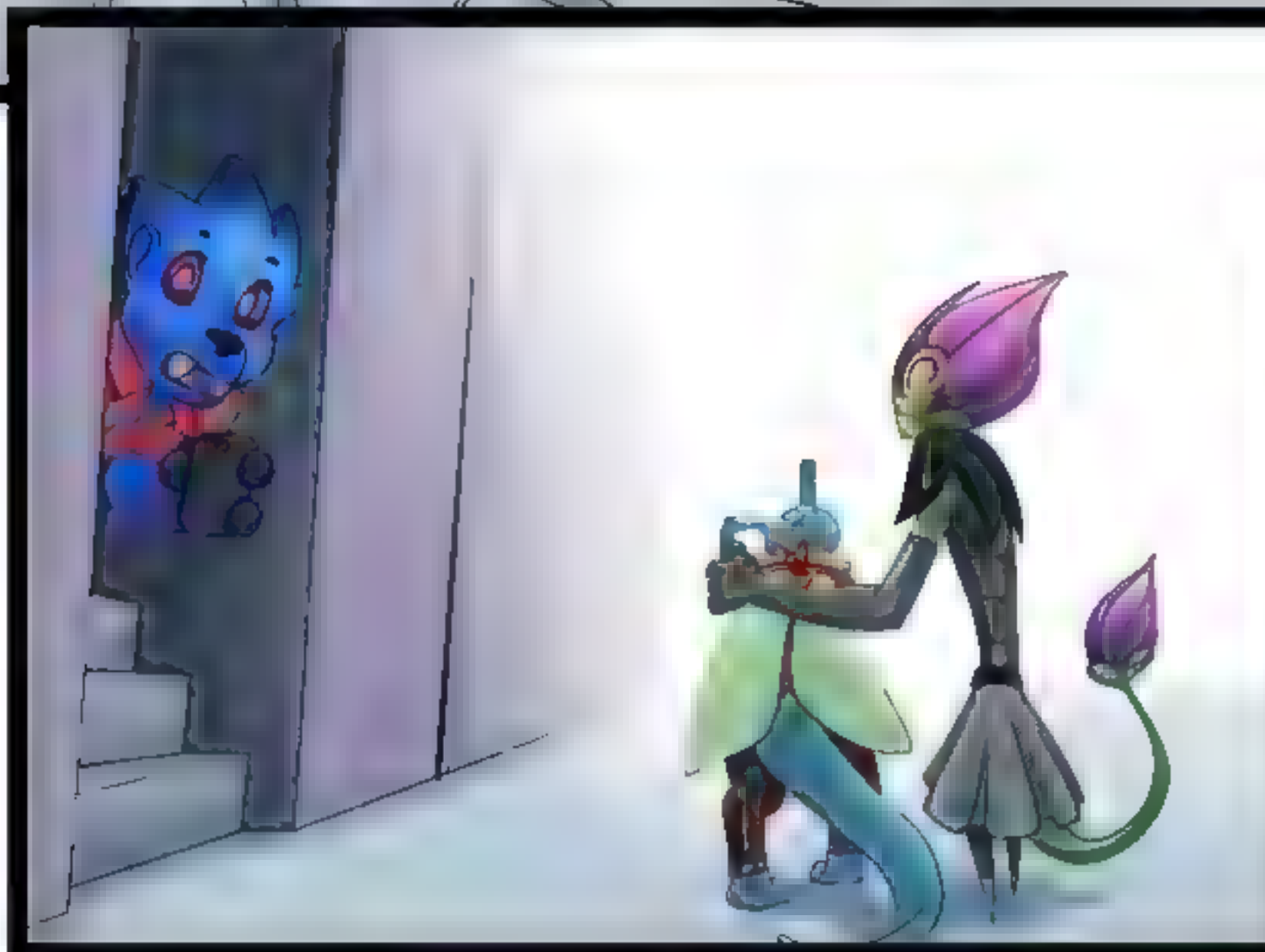
NOW EVERYTHING'S
OUT IN THE OPEN, AND
WE CAN TALK IT OUT LIKE
CIVILIZED ADULTS!

KIND OF
A RELIEF,
ISN'T IT?

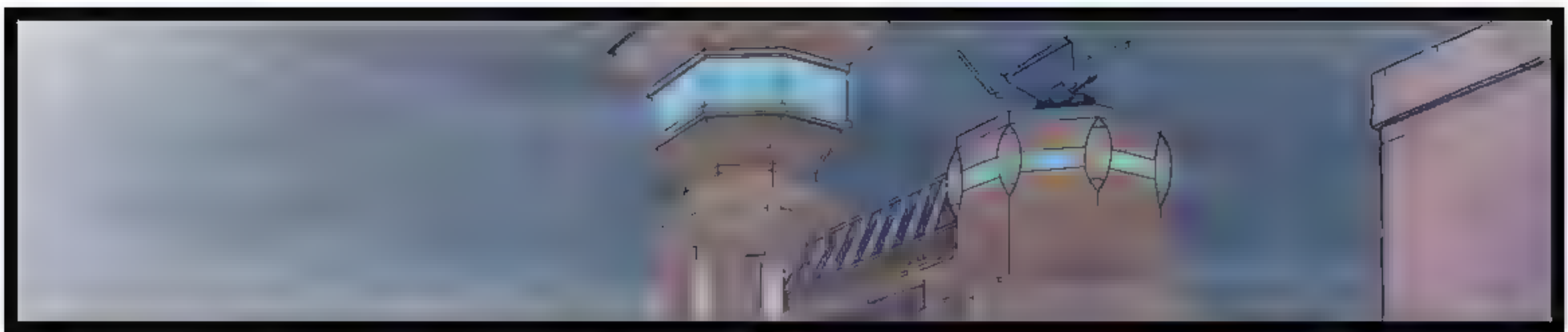


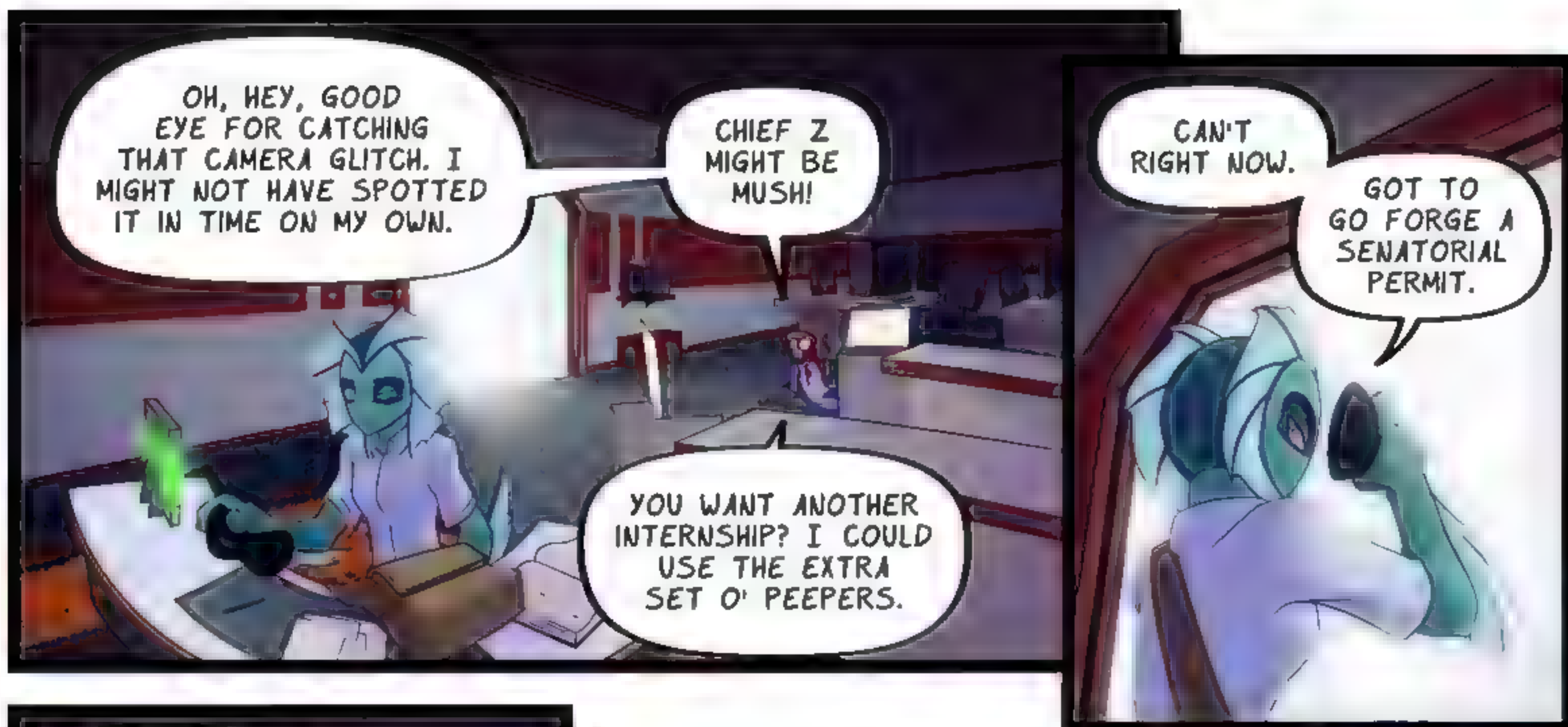
PROFESSOR,
YOU TRUST TAZHO.
PLEASE GO WITH HIM.
PEACEFULLY.

THERE ARE
CIVILIANS HERE.









... RIGHT??





WHICH OF YOU
THOUGHT DISOBEYING A
DIRECT ORDER WAS A GREAT
IDEA? AND WHY IN THE NAME
OF BRISKET DID YOU **PUT**
ME IN A HOLE?

SOMEBODY
START TALKING!



THE "HOLE PLAN" MAY
NOTTA BEEN THE SHARPEST
KNIFE IN THE BLOCK, BUT THE
OTHER OPTION WOULD'A LEFT
YOU FOR DEAD.

NOT EXACTLY
IN OUR JOB
DESCRIPTION.



IN YOUR JOB
DESCRIPTION, **SIR!**

AND YOUR JOB
IS TO DO WHAT YOUR
COMMANDING OFFICER
TELLS YOU!

UH,
APOLOGIES, BUT...

I THINK
WE'RE ACTUALLY
REQUIRED TO
PRIORITIZE YOUR
SAFETY, **SIR.**



AND EVEN
IF IT WASN'T, YOU'RE
TOO IMPORTANT TO US
TO JUST LET YOU
GET DELETED!

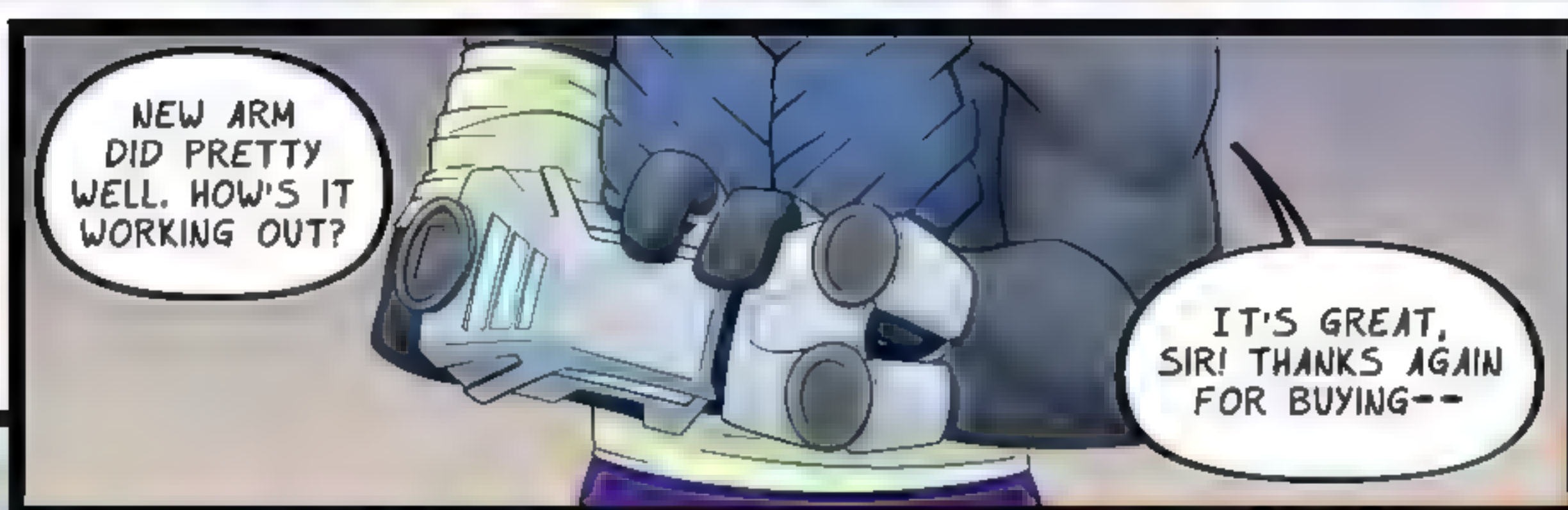


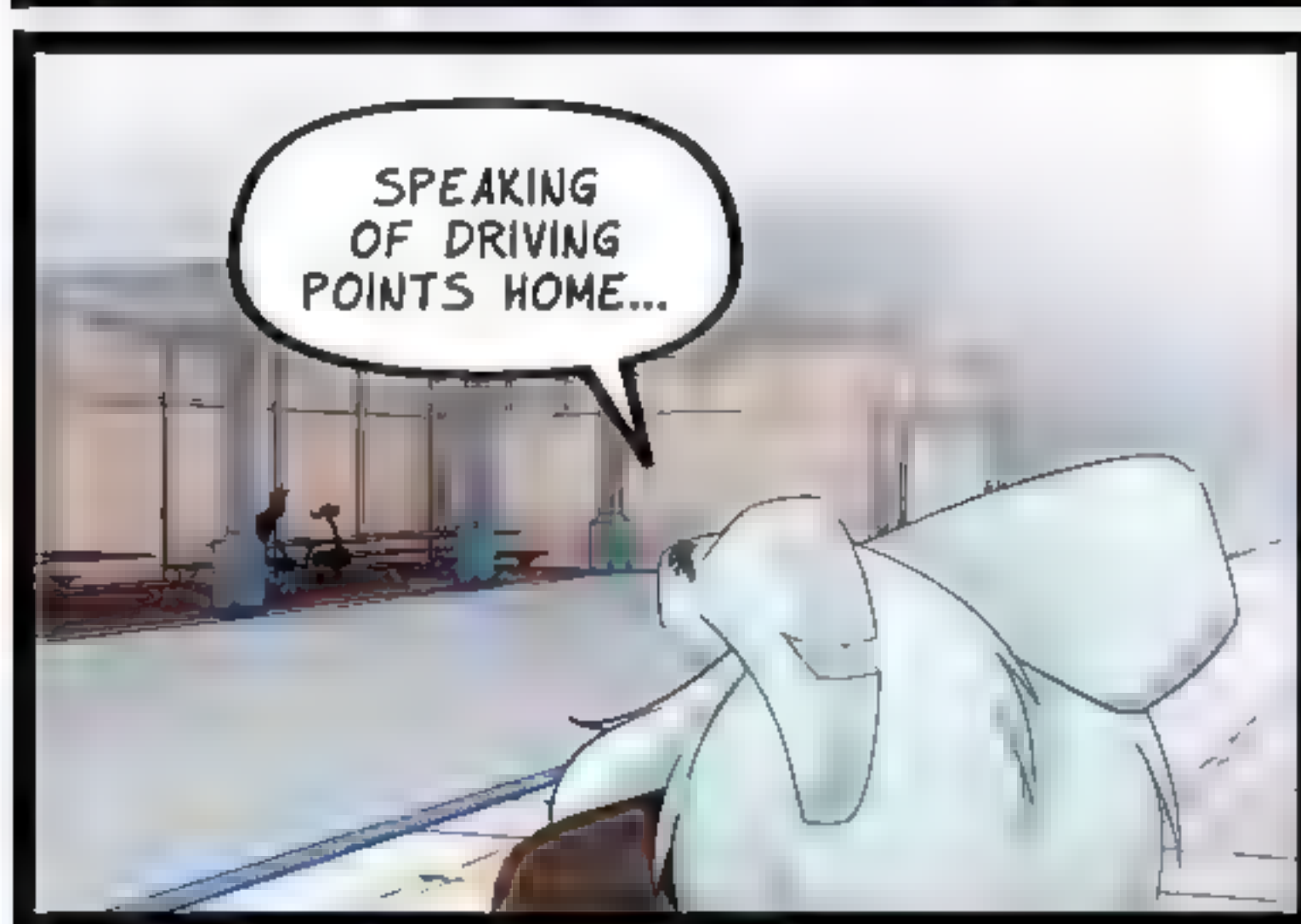
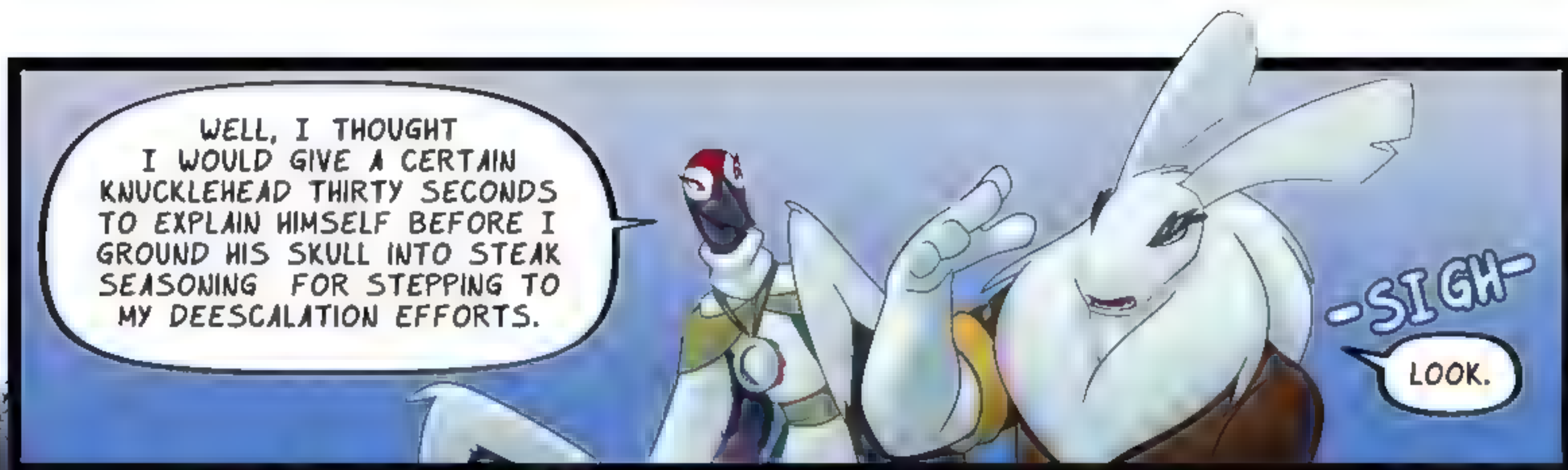
SO YOU
TRY AND LET
YOURSELVES
GET DELETED?
WHAT KIND OF--

IT'S OUR
JOB TO TANK
THE CANNON FIRE,
NOT YOURS.

...SIR.









Y'KNOW WHAT?
I WASN'T SURE AT
FIRST, BUT I THINK I
ACTUALLY REALLY
LIKE COOKING.

MM!



HEY,
KIDS.

GAME CENTER
IS UP THE HILL, IF
THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE
LOOKING FOR.



OH NAH,
BRUH, WE'RE
INTERNS HERE!

LEARNING CULINARY
SKILLAGE FROM THE
LOCAL VILLAGE.

AH, WELL
CONGRATULATIONS!

RIGHT
ON.



RIGHT. SORRY
TO INTRUDE ON
YOUR... 'STEEZ,'
KIDS. I'M Z, CHIEF
OF SECURITY.

...STEEZ?



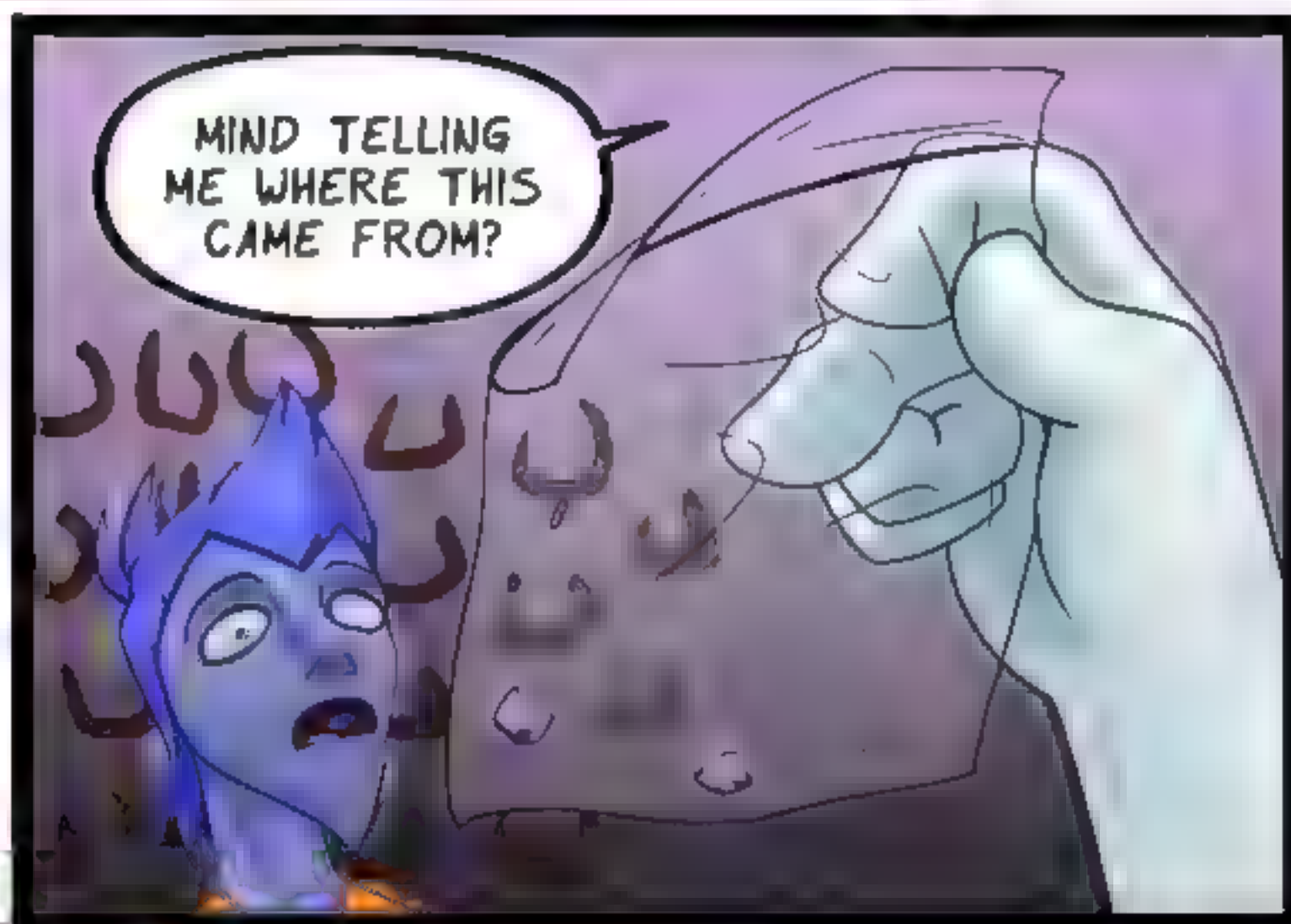
I DON'T
SUPPOSE YOU'D
MIND EMPTYING YOUR
POCKETS FOR ME?



UH... ARE
WE IN TROUBLE?

I'M REALLY
HOPING YOU AREN'T.







CARE TO
FILL ME IN?

GET THIS. NOT
ONLY WERE THOSE
TWO ON THE LIST
KHEIL GAVE US--

FALLAN PULLED
THE SAME SCHTICK
ABOUT NOT HAVING MEMORIES
OF WHATEVER AND GETTING
WEIRDLY NAUSEATED
IN THE PROCESS.

HMM...NOW
THAT YOU MENTION IT,
KHEIL REPORTED A SIMILAR
REACTION FROM ANOTHER
STUDENT SHE TARGETED.

YUP. AND
IF THAT'S
A COINCIDENCE,
I'D RATHER FIND
OUT MANUALLY.

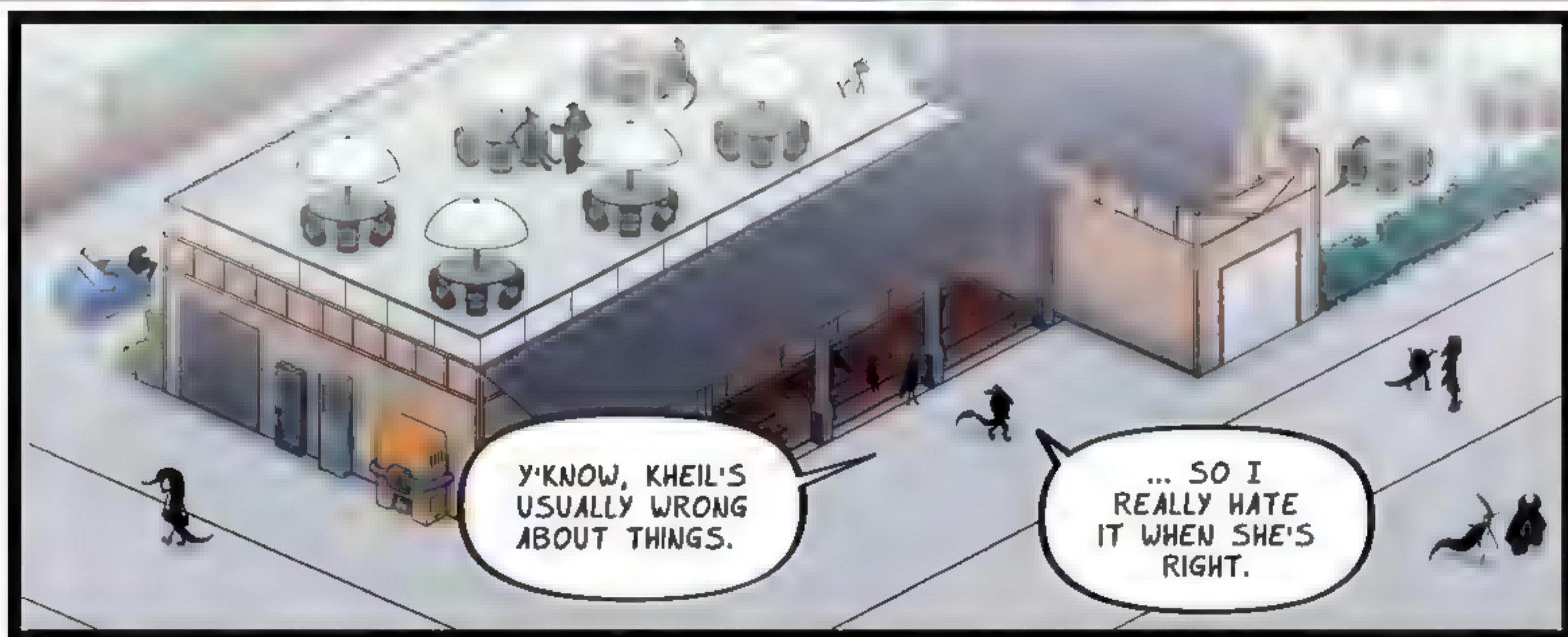
SO, WHAT
IS YOUR PLAN?



I'M CALLING
BACK THE LANCERS
TO TAKE THESE KIDS
IN AND KEEP THEM
OUT OF TROUBLE.

COULD YOU WAIT
HERE WITH THEM? I'M
GONNA CHECK INSIDE, SEE IF
THERE'S ANYONE ELSE FROM THAT
LIST OR IF ANYONE ELSE
MIGHT BE INVOLVED.

OF
COURSE.



Y'KNOW, KHEIL'S
USUALLY WRONG
ABOUT THINGS.

... SO I
REALLY HATE
IT WHEN SHE'S
RIGHT.



--SO IF THIS GETS APPROVED, I MIGHT GET A VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATE AHEAD OF GRADUATION.

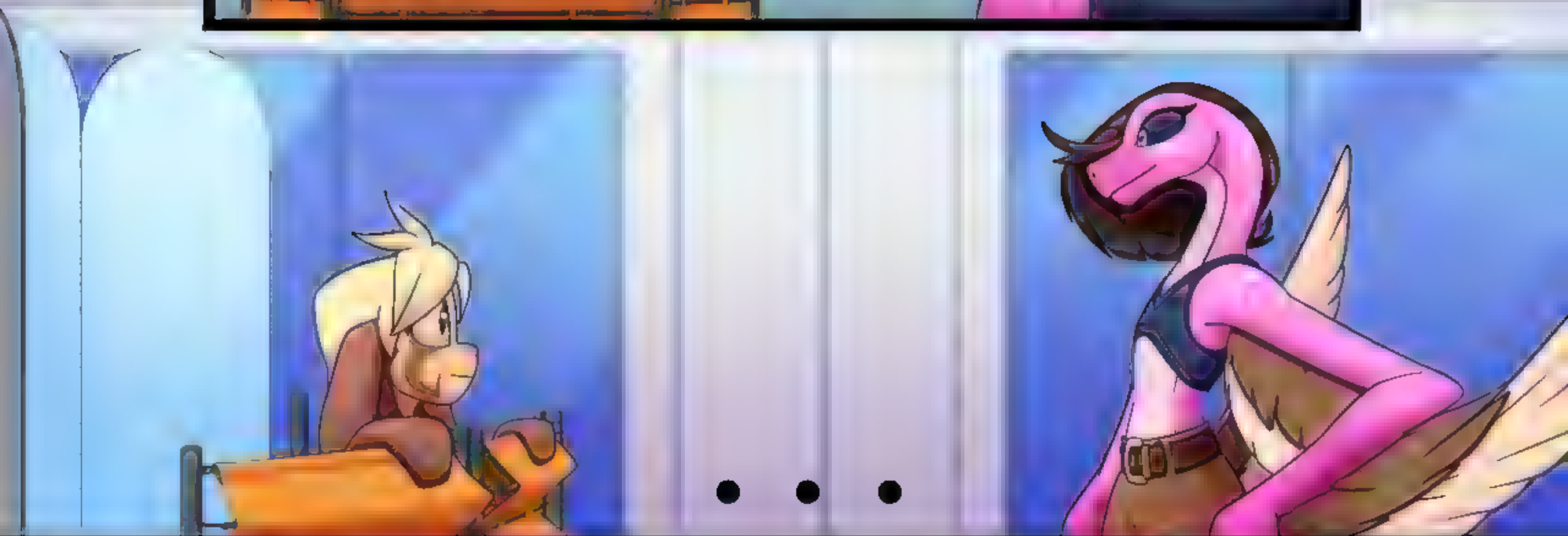
THERE'S A RUMOR THAT STUDENTS WHO ACHIEVE THAT GET TO LOOK THROUGH MR. NAZURET'S PERSONAL SKETCH BOOKS! THAT WOULD BE NUTS, DON'TCHA THINK?



UH... I GUESS? SORRY, I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT FASHION...

BUT YOU SEEM PRETTY HYPED ABOUT IT, SO GOOD LUCK!

HEH, THANKS.



...



...ALRIGHT.

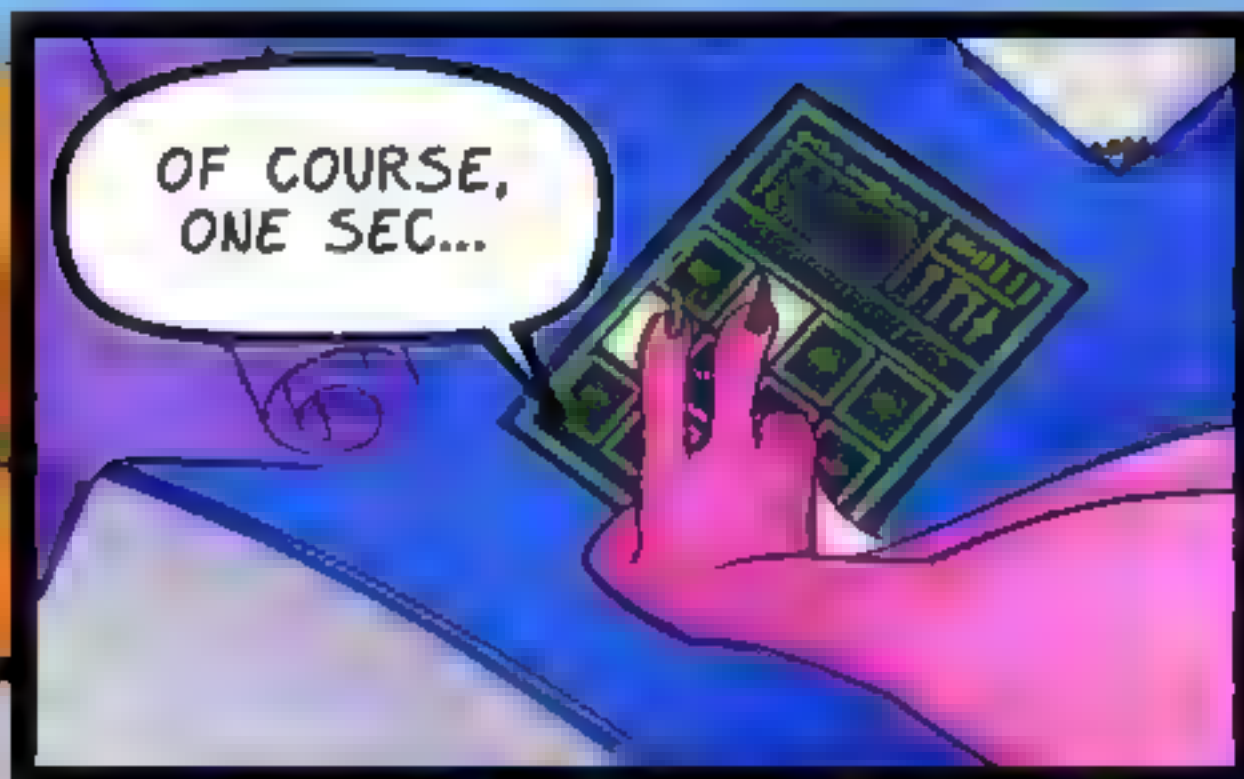
THIS IS GETTING AWKWARD. LISTEN, PART OF THE REASON I BROUGHT YOU HERE IS I WAS HOPING YOU'D BE ABLE TO FILL ME IN ON SOMETHING.



WHAT'S GOING ON WITH OZ?



I, UH -- I
SHOULDN'T BE
TALKING ABOUT THAT
IN PUBLIC. IT'S KINDA
PERSONAL, Y'KNOW?



OF COURSE,
ONE SEC...

PURR OWN



THE WORKSHOP
GETS NOISY SOMETIMES,
SO WE CAN VOLUME SEAL
OUR OWN LITTLE
BOOTH HERE.



HHNNNGH...

OKAY, THAT
WAS JUST AN
EXCUSE.



HEH, FIGURED.
IT WAS WORTH
A SHOT.

WELL, I
DON'T WANT TO MAKE
YOU UNCOMFORTABLE.
WE CAN TALK ABOUT
SOMETHING ELSE,
IF YOU WANT--

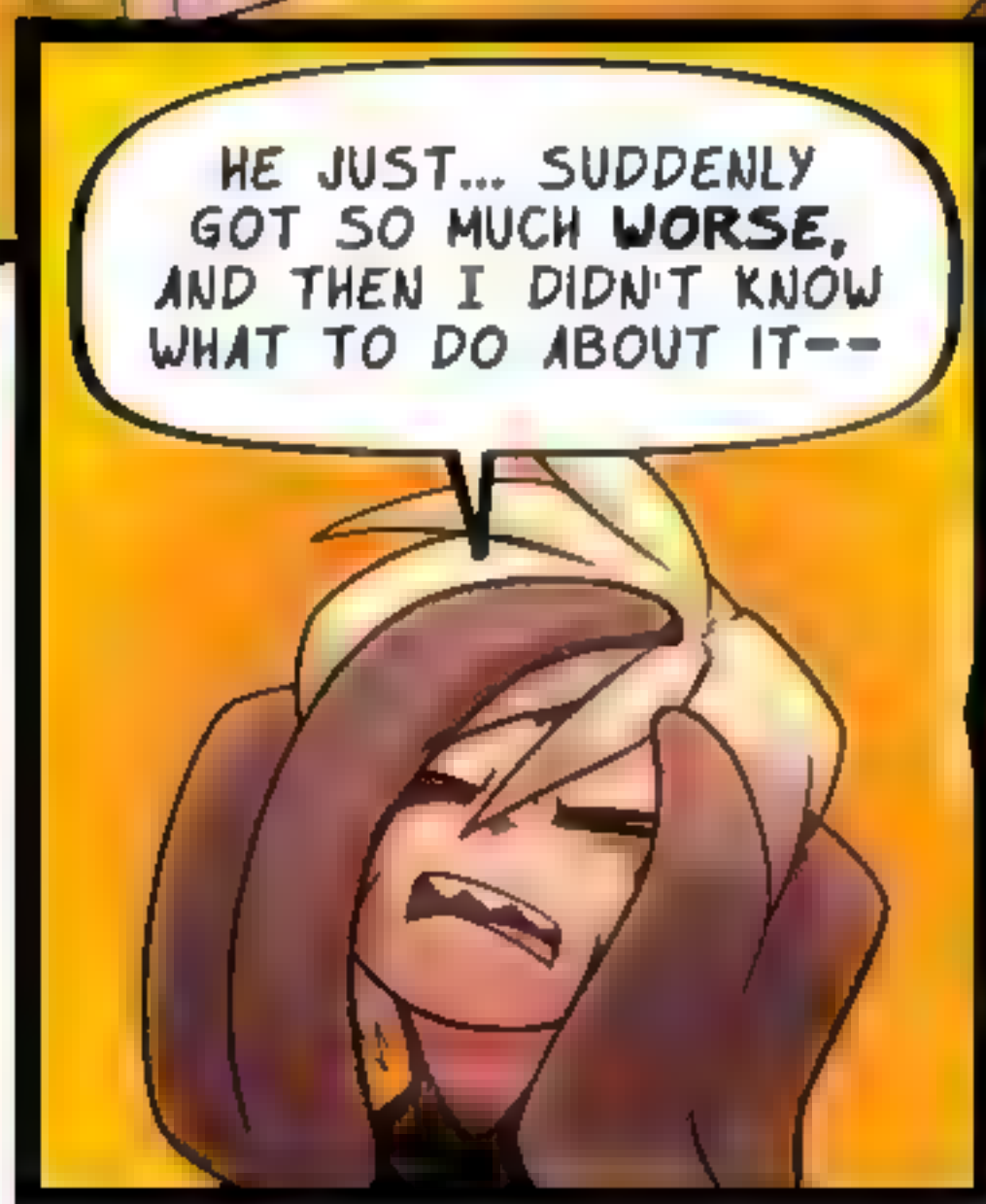


HEY, YEAH!
YOU'RE...

YOU'RE GOOD
AT BEING FRIENDS
WITH PEOPLE, RIGHT?



HUH?







HUFF,
OKAY!

SOUNDS LIKE
YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO
GET OFF YOUR CHEST
AND NOWHERE TO
OFFLOAD IT.

Y'KNOW WHAT?
LET'S START
OVER. YOU NEED
FRIENDSHIP ADVICE?



WHAT DO
YOU THINK YOUR
FRIENDSHIP WITH
OZ IS MISSING?

HMM.





FEELS LIKE A LOT RIGHT NOW.. YOU'RE THE EXPERT SOCIALITE. COULDN'T YOU TELL ME?

...YEAH, I GUESS.

I STILL DON'T KNOW, THOUGH.

TO BE HONEST, EVERYONE KNOWS YOU AND THAT ONE GREEN KID ARE OZ'S WHOLE WORLD.

THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN FOR NO REASON.

SO YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO GET SPECIFIC.

OKAY, LET'S START SIMPLE. HOW DID YOU GUYS MEET?



WELL, Z-- UH, THE SECURITY CHIEF-- BROUGHT HIM HERE LIKE TEN-ISH YEARS AGO, AND WE WERE THE ONLY KIDS AROUND, SO...

WAIT, TEN? THAT WOULD MEAN OZ WAS HERE AT LEAST **TWO YEARS** BEFORE STARTING SCHOOL?

YEAH?

AND YOU'RE OUR JUNIOR BY A COUPLE OF YEARS, RIGHT? SO THEN...

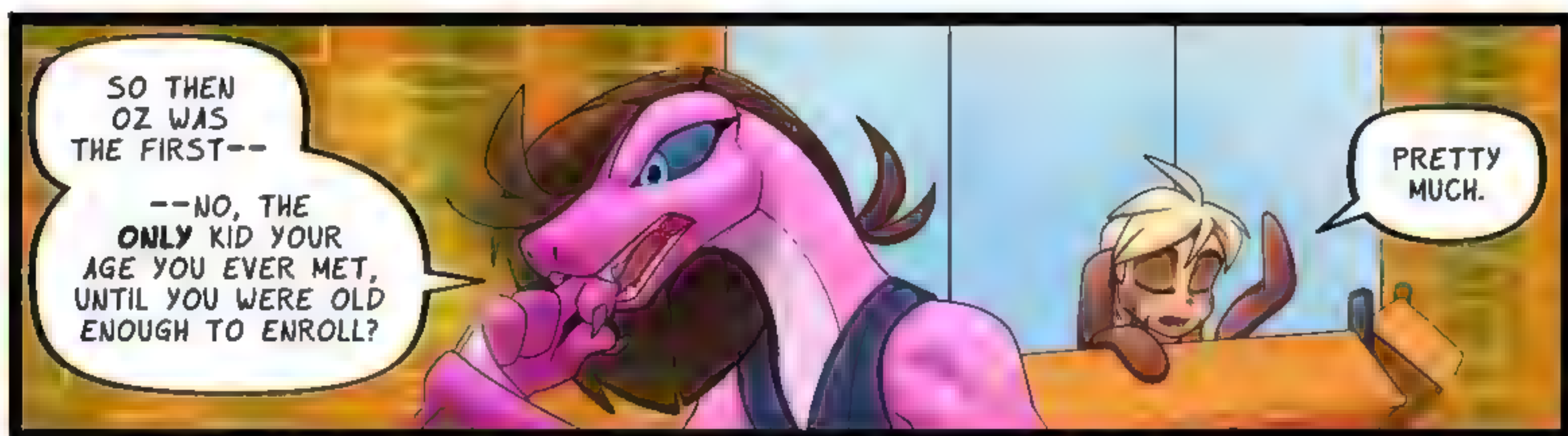
HOLD UP. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE EXACTLY?

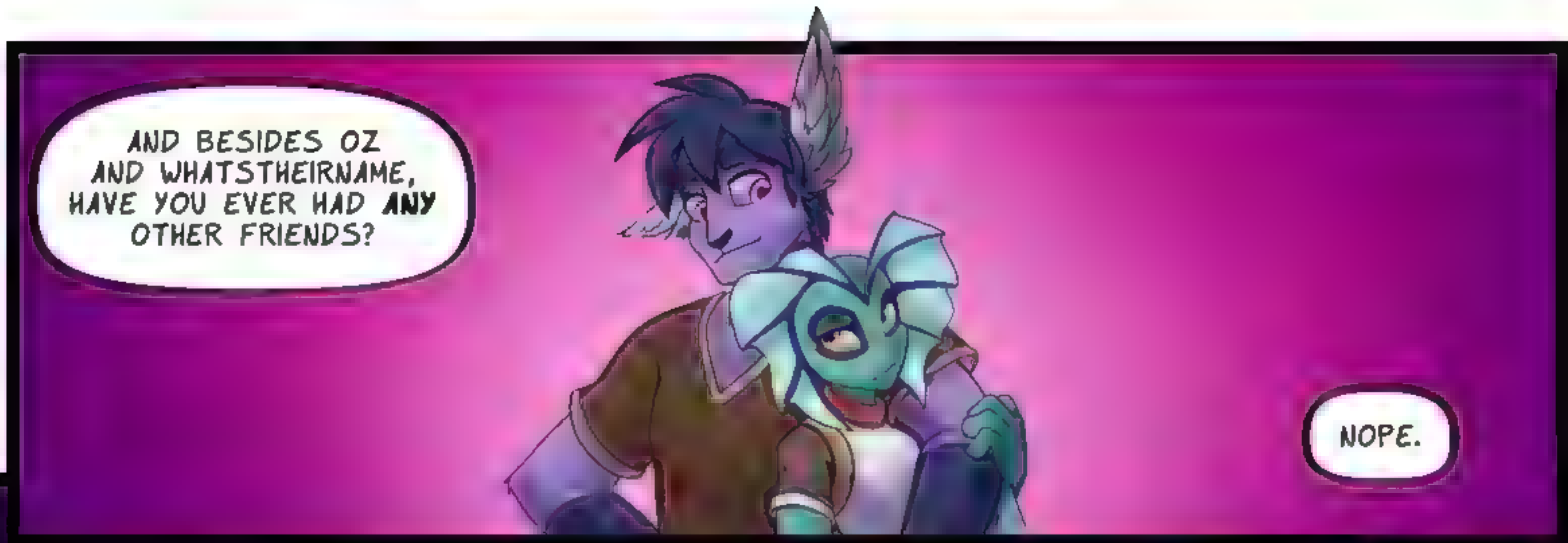


AT THE SCHOOL? I GREW UP HERE.



ARE YOU **SERIOUS?**





AND BESIDES OZ
AND WHATSTHEIRNAME,
HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANY
OTHER FRIENDS?

NOPE.



SO LET
ME GET THIS
STRAIGHT. YOU WERE
RAISED HERE,

NEVER GOT
TO MEET ANY OTHER
KIDS FOR MOST
OF YOUR LIFE,

NEVER GOT
TO **SEE ANYTHING**
BEYOND THE WALLS,

AND TRAINED
SINCE YOU WERE
LITTLE TO...

WHAT? BECOME
SOME KIND OF
SUPER SOLDIER?



WELL--
I-- UMH...



I'M AFRAID
TO ASK, BUT...

DO YOU HAVE
PARENTS, OR
WERE YOU... YOU
KNOW, GROWN IN
LIKE A POD?



WELL-- NO-- KHEIL,
UNLESS YOU'RE CAUSING
SOMEONE TROUBLE, PEOPLE
DON'T REALLY TALK ABOUT
YOU, EVER--

HEY!

STAY ON
TRACK!

LOOK, UHM...
THIS WHOLE THING
YOU'VE SHARED JUST
SOUNDS SO...

YOU SOUND
LIKE EVERYTHING
I'M SAYING ISN'T
AWESOME.

SHHHHHH

...YOU MAKE...
SO MUCH MORE
SENSE NOW.

I... DO?

YES, WELL, I
STILL HAVE MORE
QUESTIONS THAN
ANSWERS, BUT YES.

RIGHT NOW,
I JUST NEED
TO KNOW ONE
MORE THING.

O-OKAY?

WHEN A REGULAR STUDENT BECOMES A CANDIDATE FOR THE A.I.S.L.E. PROGRAM, THEY'RE **SLOWLY** FED ALL THE INFORMATION, AND GIVEN PLENTY OF TIME TO CHOOSE WHETHER TO JOIN UP.

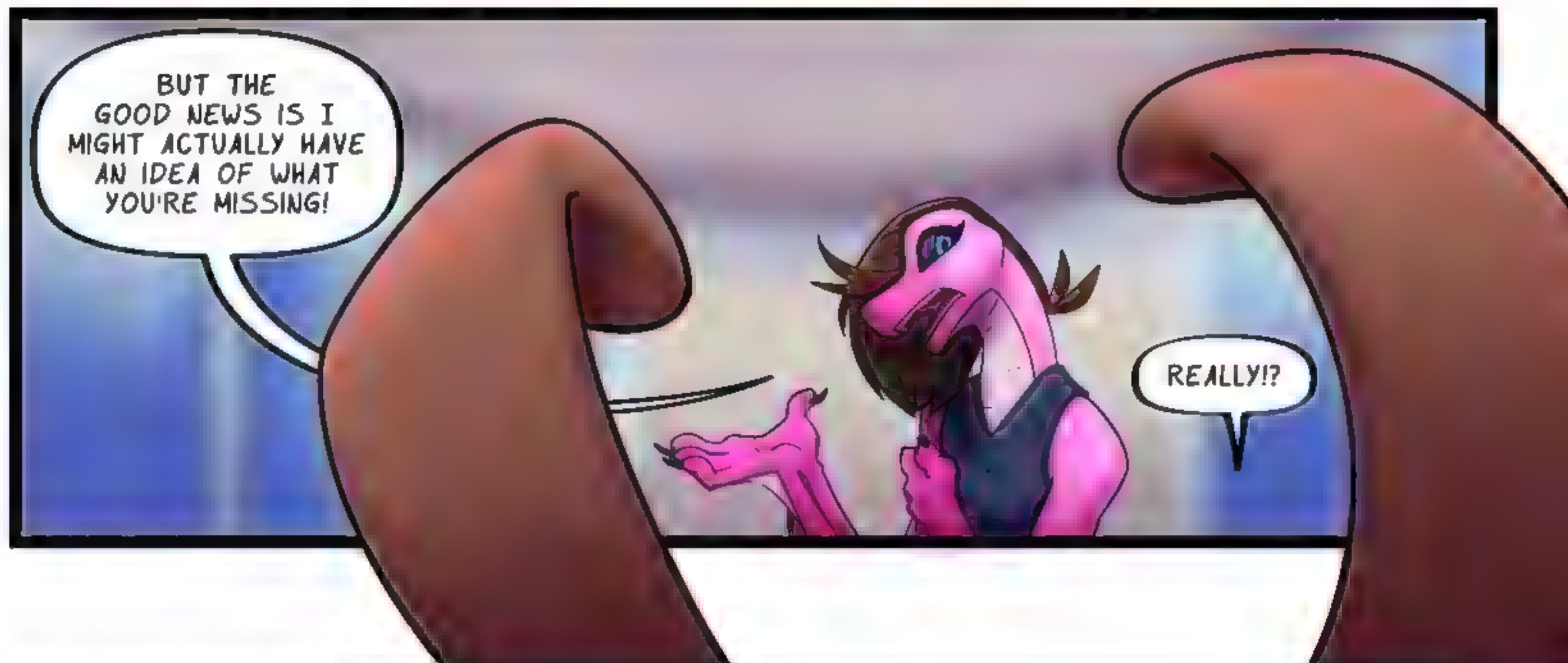
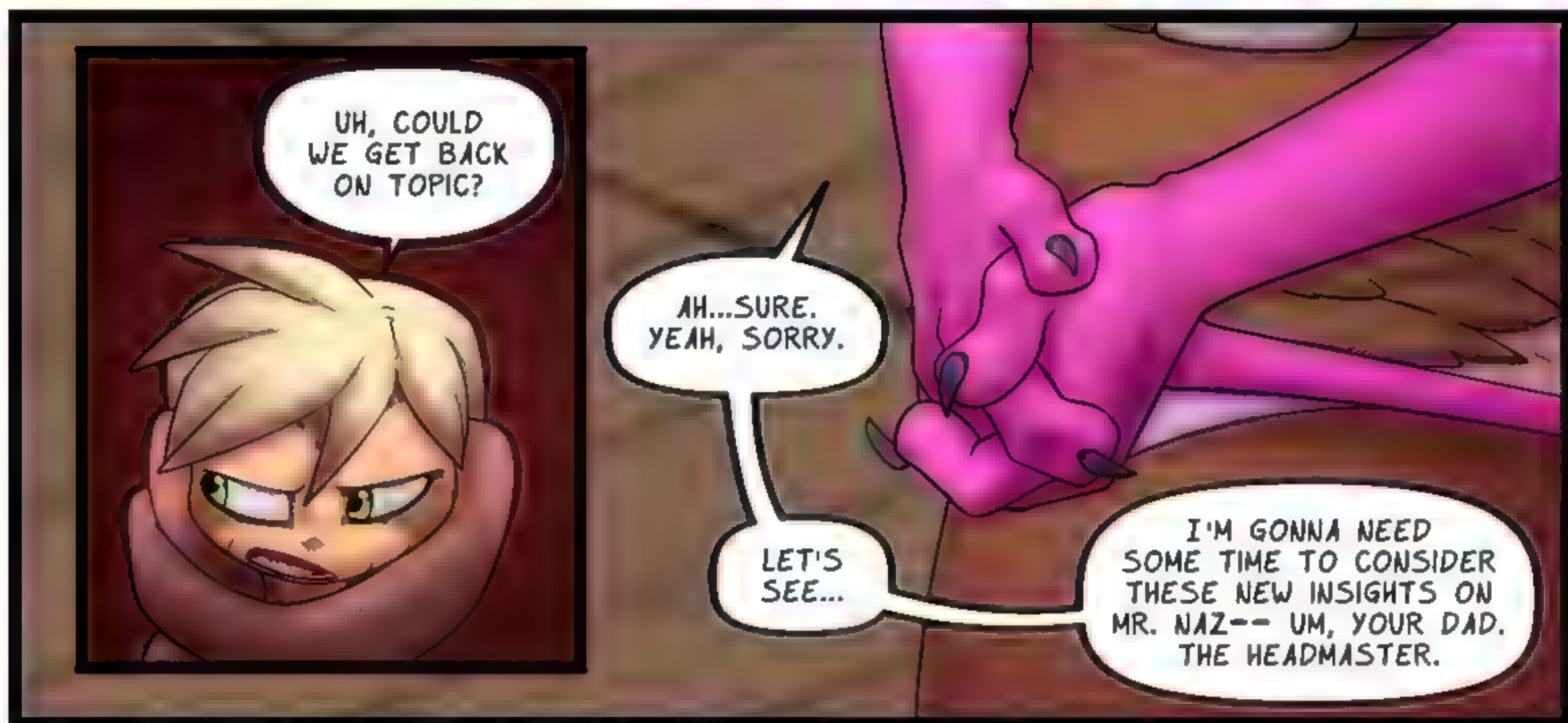
I'M HERE BECAUSE I SAT ON THAT DECISION FOR MONTHS BEFORE MAKING THE CALL.

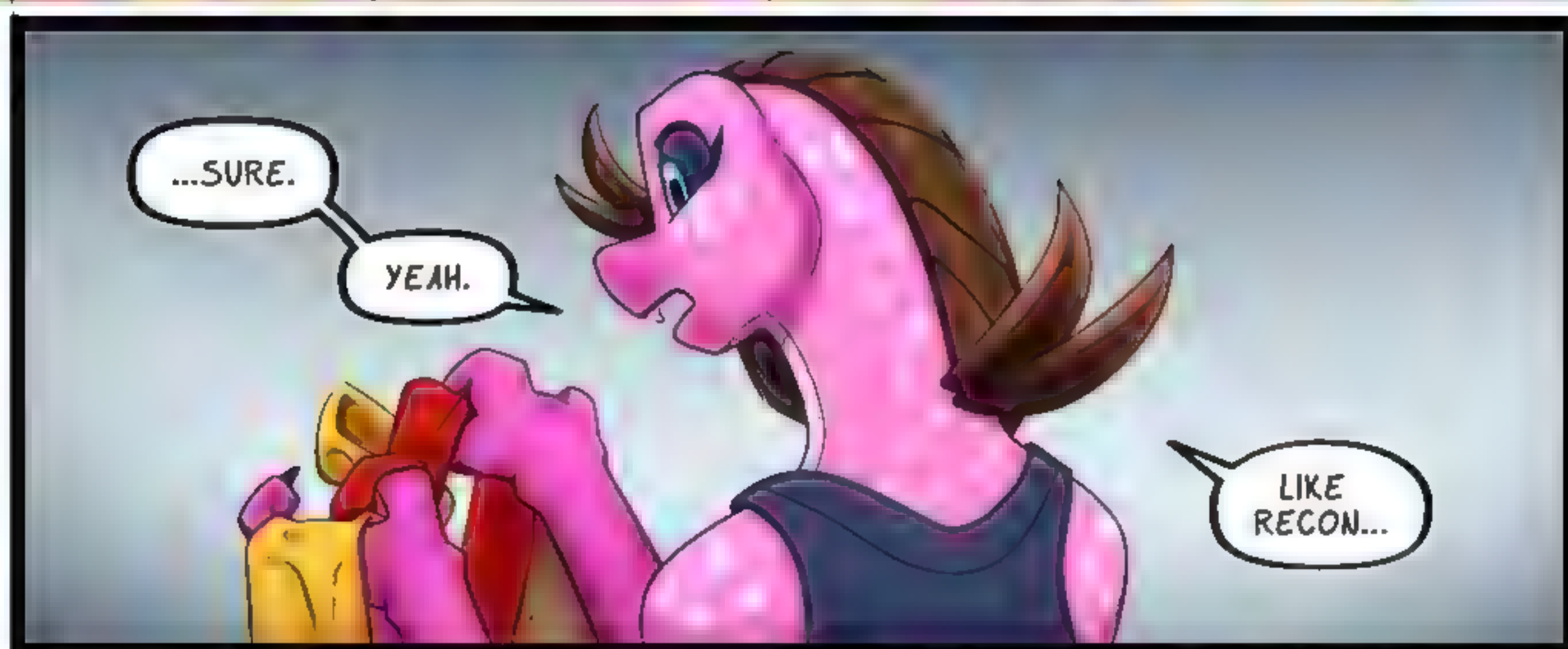
SAME WITH OZ, ZAEGON, AND EVERYONE ELSE.

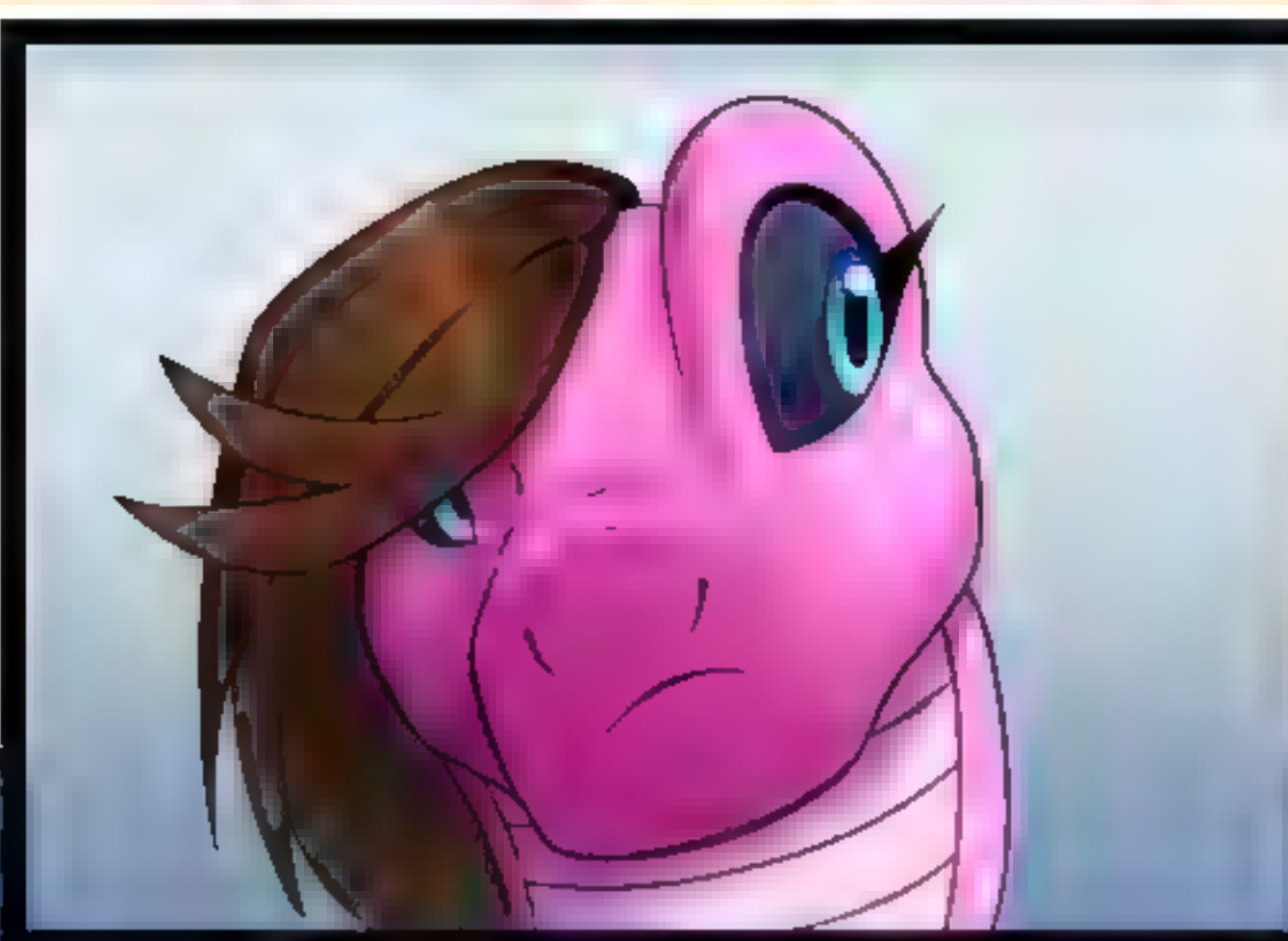
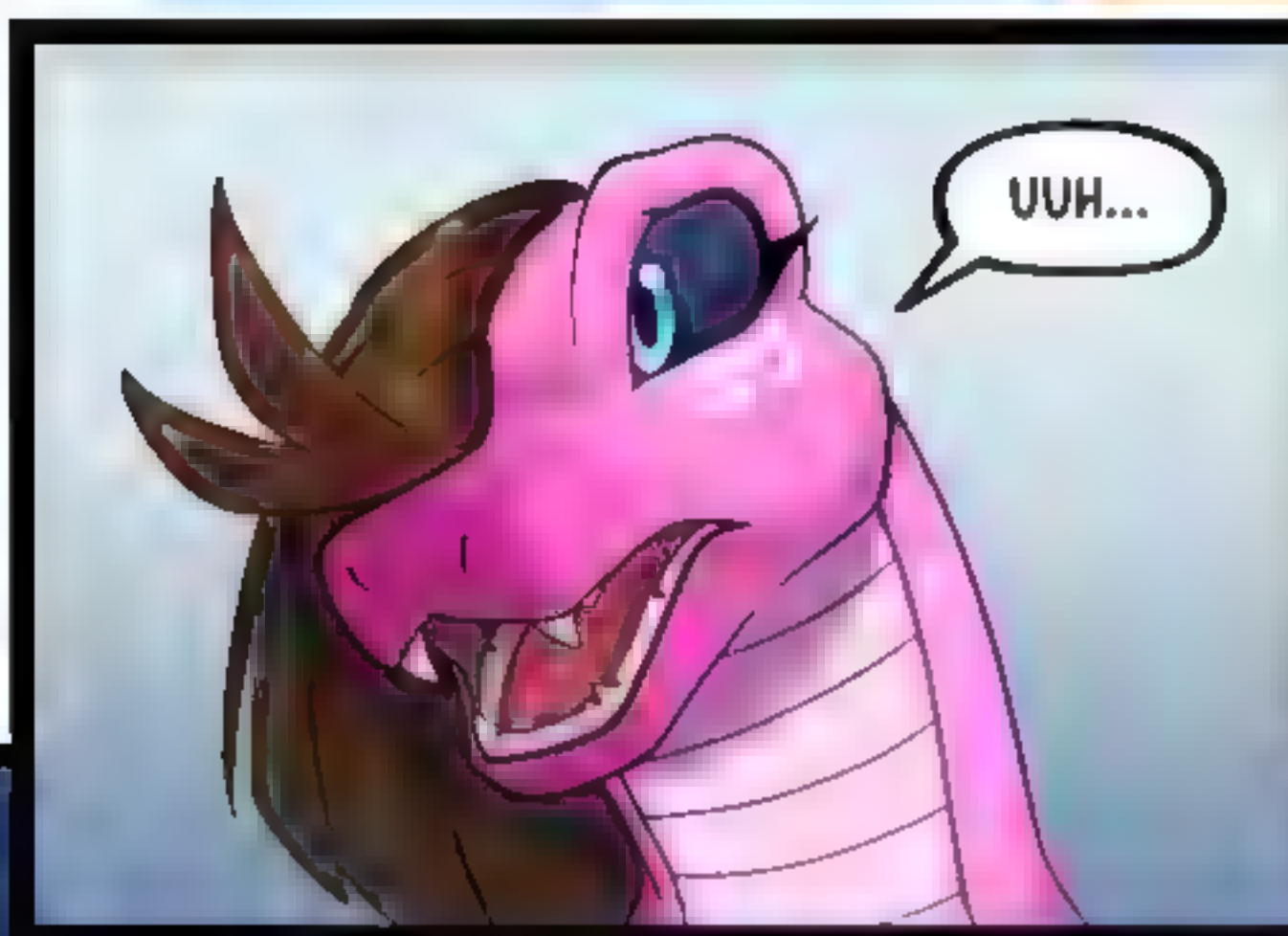
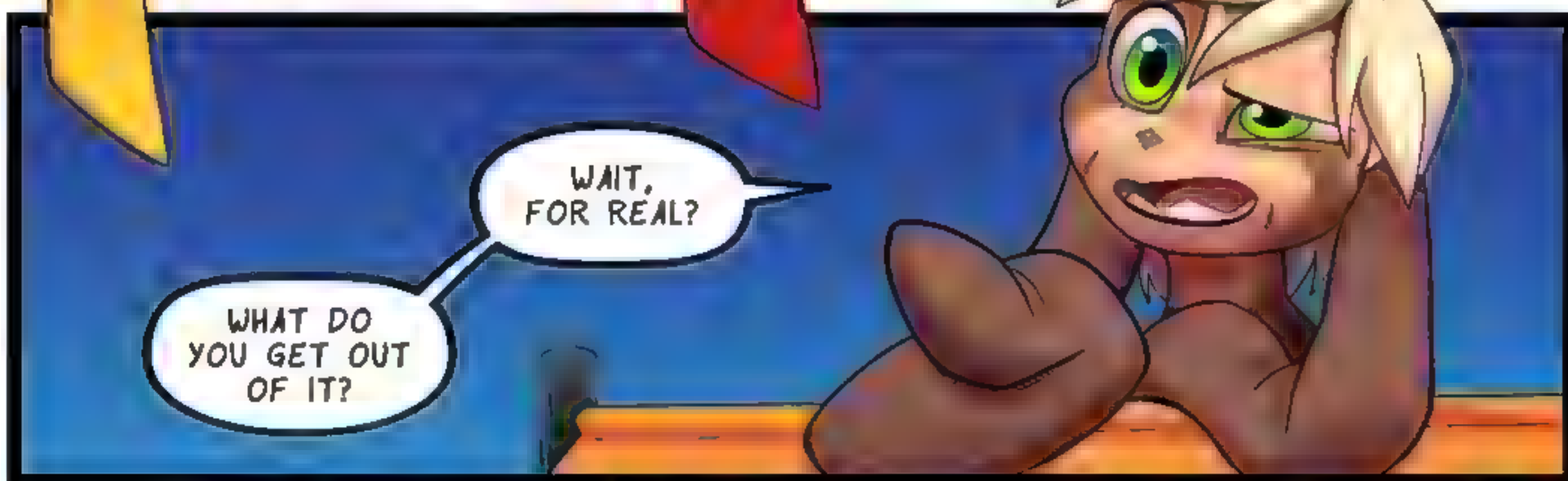
BUT YOU... GREW UP HERE AND TRAINED FROM **REAL** EARLY ON.

IS THIS ACTUALLY WHAT YOU WANT TO DO?

IS ANY OF THIS **YOUR** CHOICE?



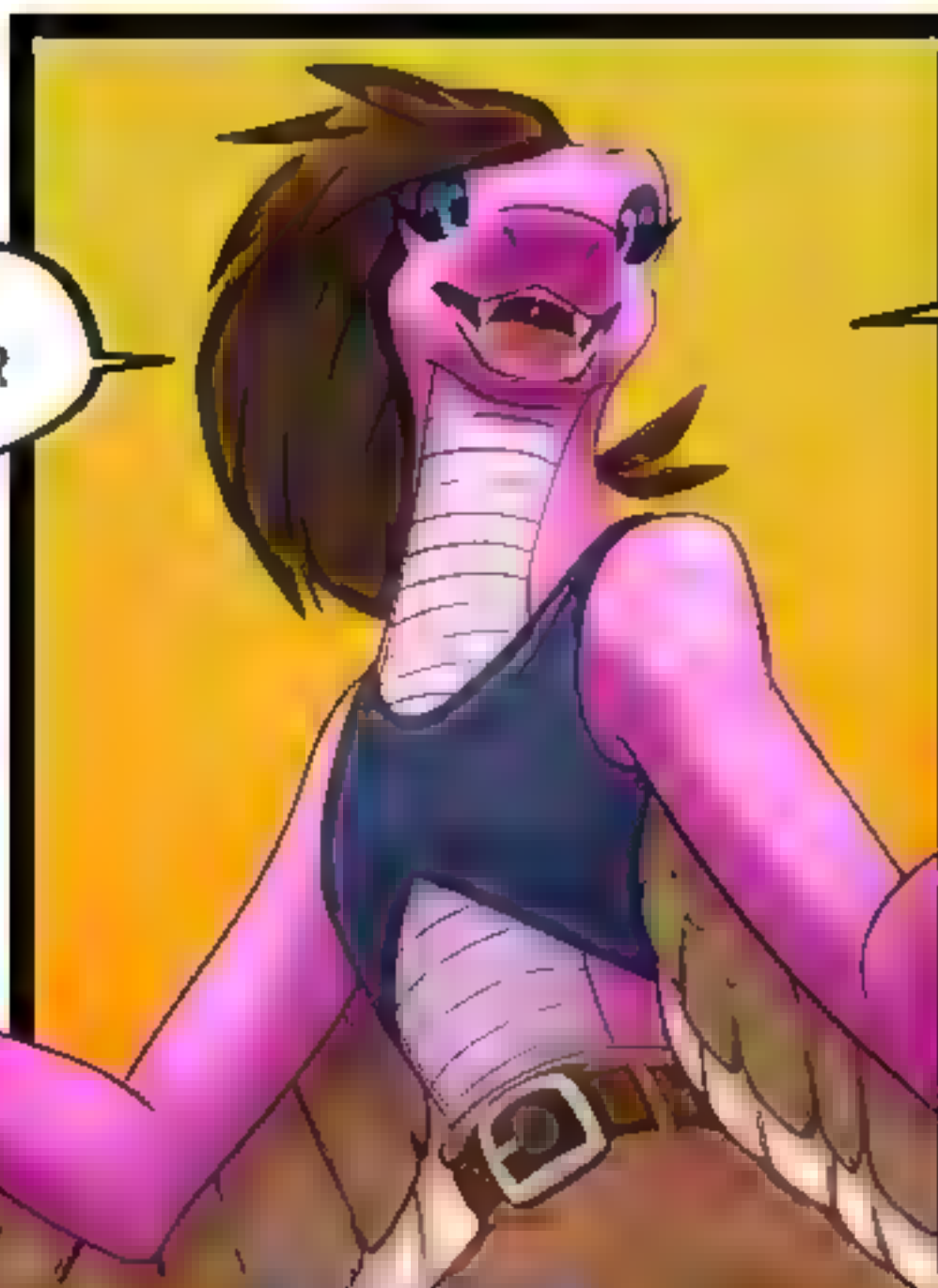






I... GUESS THAT
MAKES SENSE?

IT DOES,
DOESN'T IT?



NOW, STAND
UP STRAIGHT. MIRROR
BEHIND YOU'S TURNING
AND THE BARRIER'S
GOING DOWN.

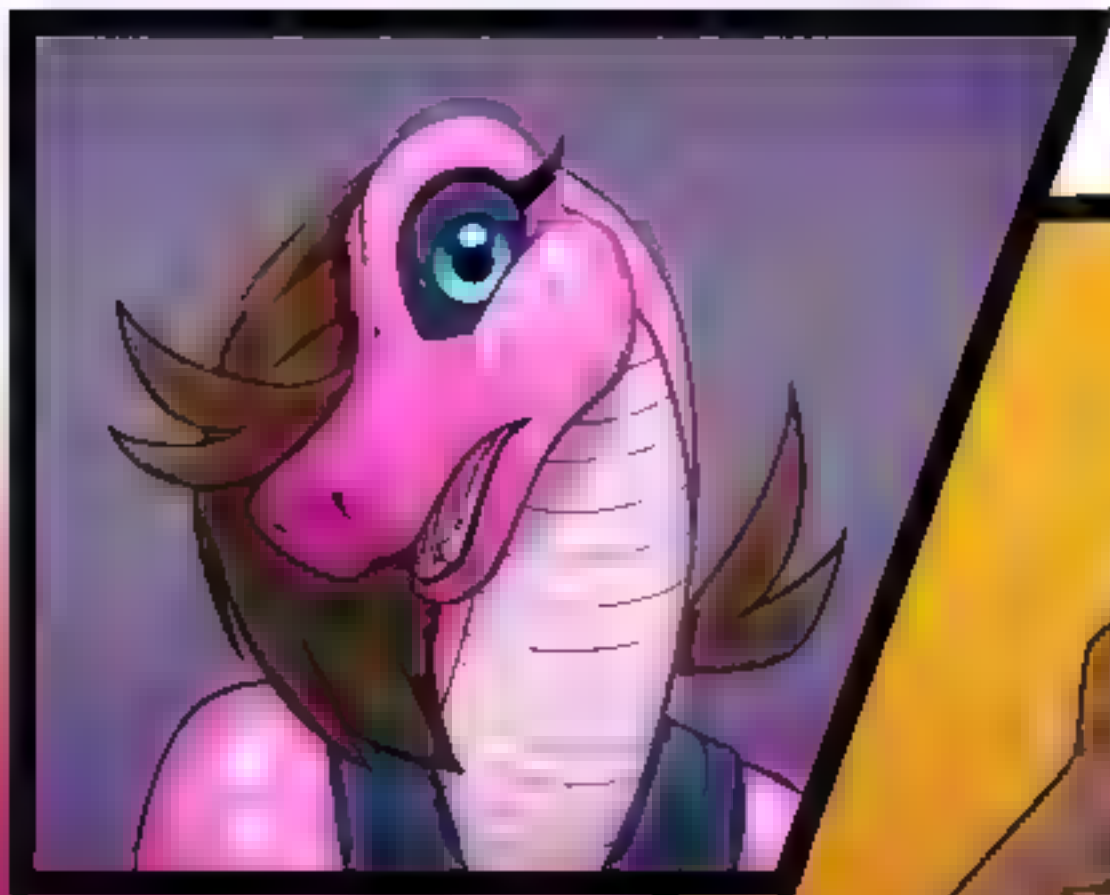


NOT BAD.
THOUGH SOMETHING
TELLS ME IT ISN'T YOUR
USUAL STYLE, HAHA.

WHAT DO
YOU THINK?



OHOO, SICK!
I LOOK LIKE I'M
ABOUT TO ASSASSINATE
A CORRUPT POLITICIAN!

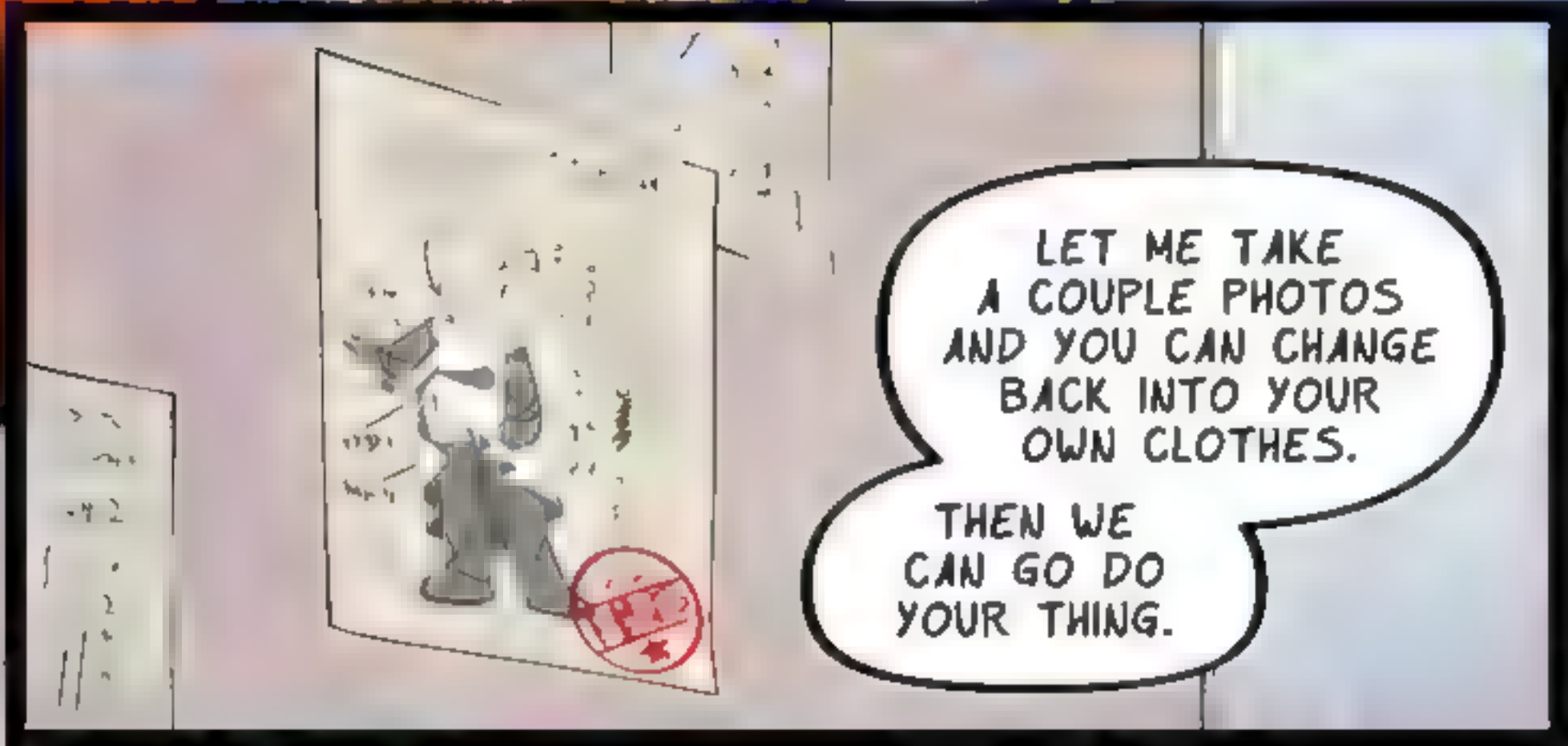


UH, SORRY,
WAS THAT... NOT
AN OKAY COMMENT
TO MAKE?



YOU KNOW WHAT?
GIVEN EVERYTHING I
JUST LEARNED, I THINK
THAT'S ACTUALLY A VERY
SWEET COMPLIMENT
COMING FROM YOU.

AWESOME! SO...
WHAT NOW?

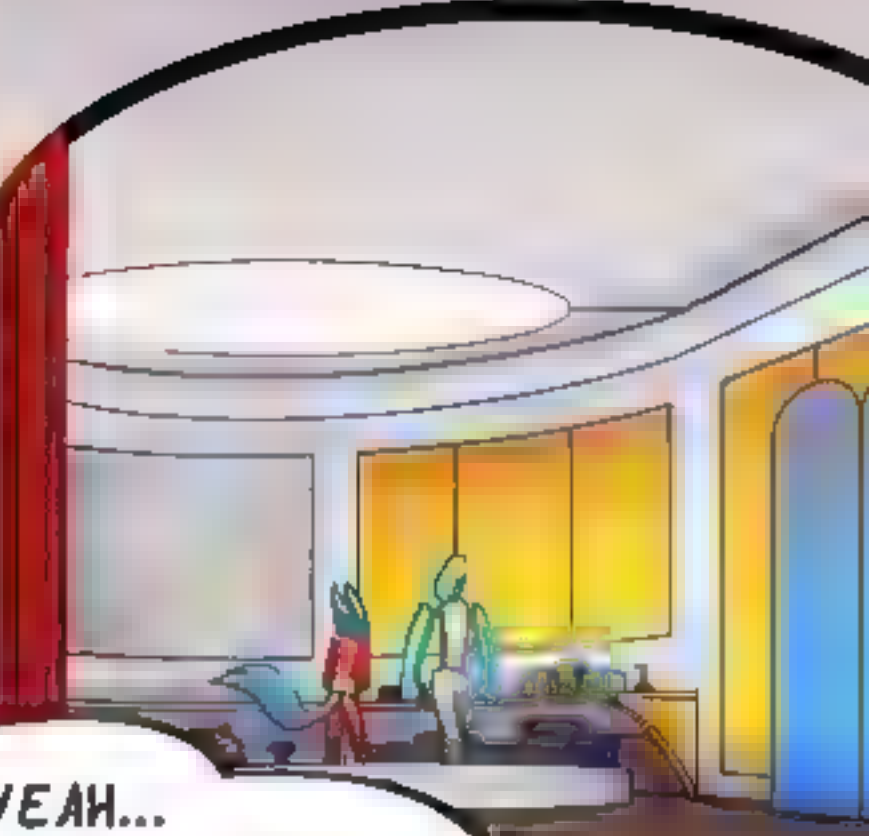


LET ME TAKE
A COUPLE PHOTOS
AND YOU CAN CHANGE
BACK INTO YOUR
OWN CLOTHES.
THEN WE
CAN GO DO
YOUR THING.

SWEET! THANK
YOU SO MUCH,
KAURA, YOU'RE
A LIFESAVER!



YEAH...
...DON'T
MENTION IT.





I GOT US A FEW EXTRA HANDS TO HELP OUT AT THE DORMS.

FOR REAL?



WAIT WAIT WAIT -- HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?



WELL, I WAS MOPING AROUND--

I'LL FILL YOU IN LATER--

AND THEY CAME TO CHEER ME UP. I TOLD THEM WE'VE GOT SOMETHING PLANNED, SO THEY OFFERED TO HELP.

WHAT DID YOU TELL THEM?

NOTHING SENSITIVE. DON'T WORRY. YOU'RE SQUAD LEADER ON THIS ONE, SO YOU GET TO BRIEF THE TROOPS.



HEY, COME HERE A SEC.



YEAH?



THANK YOU.

I'VE BEEN DROPPING THE BALL LATELY, AND I JUST--

YOU'RE THE BEST, OZ. I HOPE YOU KNOW THAT.

UH... I MEAN, THANKS, BUT WHAT BROUGHT THIS ON?



UH...

I'LL FILL YOU IN IN A BIT.



SO, I HEAR YOU GUYS WANT TO HELP!

OORRR YOU WANT TO HELP OZ, AT LEAST.



BUT FIRST THING'S FIRST -- I CAN ONLY TAKE A.I.S.L.E. MEMBERS ON THIS PROJECT.

SO YOU,

YOU,

YOU FOUR,

THE TWO OF YOU BACK THERE, AND YOU TWO--

YOU GUYS ARE GOOD TO GO HOME. THANKS FOR OFFERING TO BE HERE THOUGH!



WHY ONLY A.I.S.L.E.?

GOOD QUESTION! YOU SEE--



THE ALTERNATIVE INDEPENDENT STUDENT LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE IS A **PRESTIGIOUS** PROGRAM FOR UP AND COMING **PIONEERS** OF EXCELLENCE TO DEVELOP AN ENDURING FOUNDATION IN THE PURSUIT OF EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE IN THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL MASTERY AND SOCIAL DIRECTIVE WITH STEADFAST INTENT AND RESOLUTE RESOLUTION. ASPIRING TO



SNORT

SO, YOU AND KHEIL ACTUALLY HAD A TALK? HOW DID THAT GO?

IT... WENT.

SHE'S SWEET, IN HER OWN WEIRD LITTLE WAY.

SHE SEEMED HAPPY TO TELL ME ANYTHING I ASKED, BUT NOW THERE'S MORE QUESTIONS THAN I HAVE ANSWERS.

I CAN BRING YOU AROUND TO THEIR DORM AFTER HOURS IF YOU WANT MORE TIME TO PICK HER BRAIN.

KHEIL WON'T MIND, AND AL'S USUALLY TOO BUSY TO NOTICE.

--AND UNPARALLELED CIRCUMLOCUTION! MOREOVER--

SIGH...

YEAH... YEAH, I THINK THAT WILL WORK.



BYE, THANKS FOR UNDERSTANDING!

HECKIN' SNOBS
GRUMBLE

I'M OK WITH THIS. I HAVE THINGS TO DO.

A.I.S.L.E. KIDS ARE USUALLY OK, BUT SOMETIMES...

I ACTUALLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF THAT, CAN SOMEONE HELP?

KHEILAFI REALLY JUST SUCKS, HUH?



NOW, I KNOW YOU DON'T SUPER CARE ABOUT YOUR REP, BUT THAT MAY HAVE BEEN A BIT TOO INSUFFERABLE, DONCHA THINK?

PRIORITIES! IT MINIMIZES THE RISK OF INTERLOPERS AND. IF THERE'S ONE THING I KNOW HOW TO DO IT'S MAKE PEOPLE WANNA NOT BE AROUND ME!



NOW, FOR THE REST OF YOU. WE'VE GOT A FULL TEAM, AND A PLAN AS FOOLPROOF AS IT'S GONNA GET.

I'LL FILL YOU IN ON THE DETAILS ON THE WAY. SO, LET'S GET GOING!

WE GOT THIS!

ALRIGHT, MR. NAZURET.
NOW, FOR THE HARD PART.

IN ABOUT TEN
MINUTES, OUR AGENT
WILL BE IN POSITION.

THEY'LL WAIT
ON STANDBY UNTIL
THE STORM HITS. THE
RAIN WILL COVER THEIR
PRESENCE, BUT IT'LL HAVE
TO BE A QUICK RUN.

THAT MEANS
YOU NEED TO BE
READY WHEN THE
WINDOW OPENS.

SINCE YOUR POOR
CHAPERONE HAS LIKELY
BEEN LOCATED BY NOW,
ASSUME THE GUARDS
ARE HUNTING YOU.



THEY'LL SEARCH
HIGH-TRAFFIC AREAS
FIRST. AVOID THE MAIN
TRAM LINES AND SNEAK IN
FROM THE LAKESHORE.



ONCE YOU'RE
PAST THAT FIRST
PERIMETER, THEY'RE
FAR LESS LIKELY
TO SPOT YOU.



SO TAKE THAT
LITTLE ACCESS CARD
FROM YOUR BAG AND
LET YOURSELF IN.



THEN COMES
THE EASY PART.







PILOO
PILOO
PILOO
LOO

BAM!!
BAM!!
BAM!!

STOP.
RINGING!

PILOO
PILOO

PILOO
PILOO
PILOO
LOO
LOO

PILOO
PILOO
PILOO
LOO

PILOO

LOO

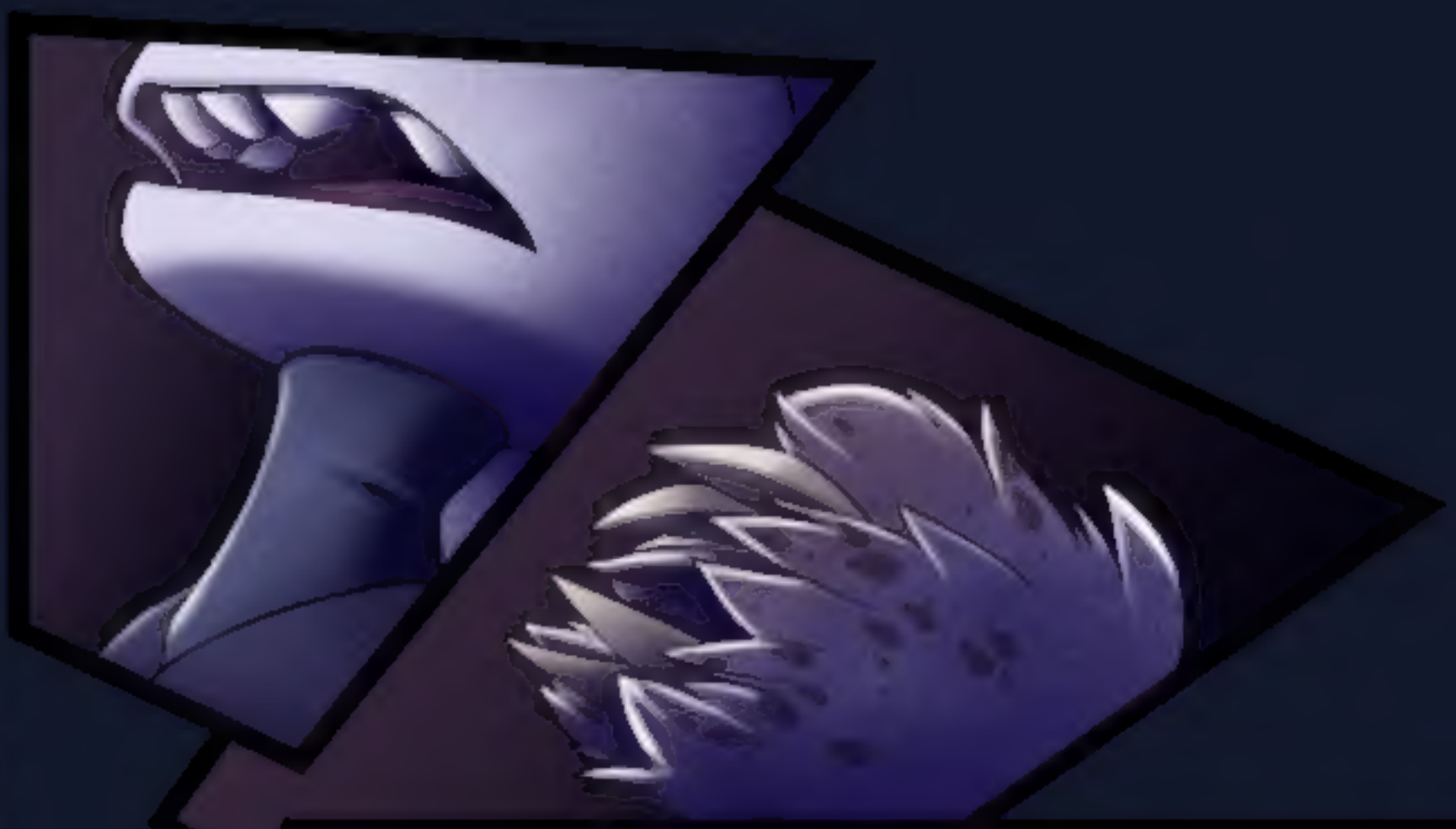
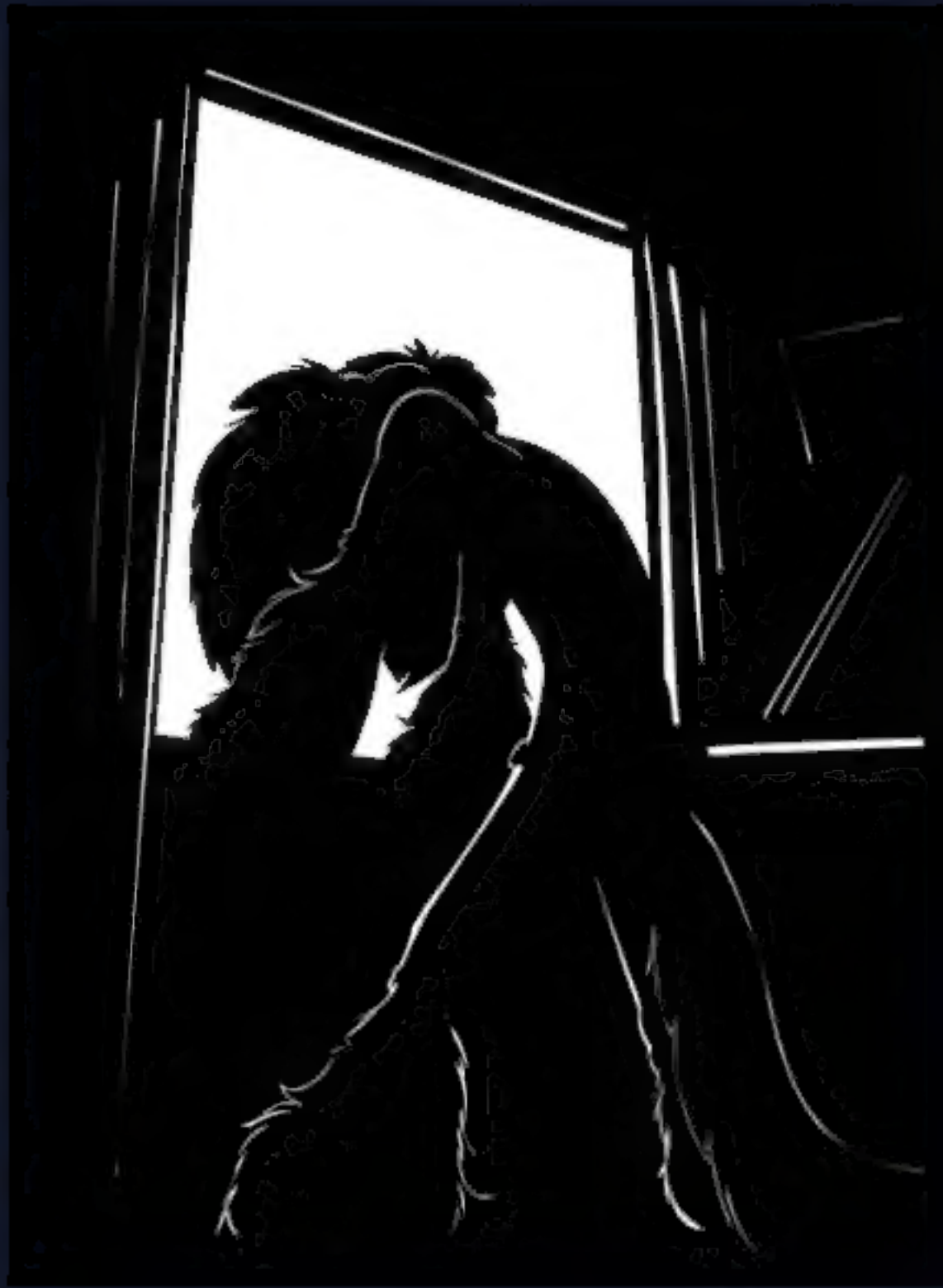
LOO

DROP IT!

COME ON...

IT'S EASY,
JUST--

DROP IT.



≡PANT≡

≡PANT≡

≡PANT≡

CLICK

WHEN I
GET OUT
OF THIS--

OH, GOODNESS,
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!
I'M RELIEVED
TO HEAR IT.

DO NOT DO
THAT AGAIN.

IN FACT, LET'S DO
SOME WATERPROOFING
OF YOUR INSTRUCTIONS,
SHALL WE?

IT WOULD BE
CRUEL TO LET YOU KEEP
FIGHTING AND DIE OF
A SEIZURE.

NOW,
PAY CLOSE
ATTENTION...